

# OUR EDUCATION

by

SWAMI  
NIRVEDANANDA

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# OUR EDUCATION

*By the same author*

*HINDUISM AT A GLANCE*  
*RELIGION AND MODERN DOUBTS*  
*SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE*

# OUR EDUCATION

*By*  
SWAMI NIRVEDANANDA



BENGAL  
VIDYAMANDIRA  
DHAKURIA

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## P R E F A C E

An article explaining a scheme of educational work adopted by the Ramakrishna Mission in 1928 was published under the caption "Some Reflections on the Educational Activities of the Ramakrishna Mission" in the first six issues of the *Prabuddha Bharata* of that year. The bulk of that article forms the basis of the present book. It has, however, been modified, re-arranged and supplemented, so as to cover current thoughts and problems regarding education in India and to extend its interest to all who have the welfare of this land at heart.

*Our Education* deals with almost all the salient points of the topic and is divided into three sections under the heads, *As It Is*, *As It Should Be*, and *How?*, which explain themselves.

Our labour will be amply rewarded if this humble endeavour be of any service to the various national organizations of India that are striving or intend to strive to spread the right kind of education all over the country.

NIRVEDANANDA

*The Ramakrishna Mission  
Students' Home, Calcutta,  
December, 1945.*

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## I

### STATE OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

"Ignorance has made them next-door neighbours to brutes."

"It is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education."

—Swami Vivekananda.

The state of education in this country is appalling. Just a fringe of the vast population comes within the pale of literacy. Towards the middle of the twentieth century when most of the Western nations have well-nigh brought education within the reach of all classes of people in their states, it is really heart-rending to note that in a province like Bengal barely ten per cent. of the population can be supposed to be literate. In the advanced countries of the West, education has long ceased to be a cultural luxury of the privileged few; it has been universally recognized as a necessary equipment for national progress. In some of those countries every child of the soil has to go through the elementary course of eight years, and even after joining work the ordinary labourer has to attend night schools attached to the various industrial and commercial concerns for the sake of specialization as well

as general culture. While in India millions go without any education !

Of the few, who are blessed with literacy, barely a handful get what is styled high education, and even this education, miserably meagre as it is, is hopelessly defective so far as its quality is concerned.

Swami Vivekananda defined education as "the manifestation of the perfection already in man". As a matter of fact, since the pedagogic discoveries of the last century the Western countries have gone a long way to accept such a conception of education. (Education means to them a development of the various faculties of man so that he may contribute his best towards the progress of the society or state to which he belongs.) Systematic efforts are made to turn each pupil into a healthy and efficient unit in the community by rousing, with the minimum of efforts on either side, all its latent powers of observation, reflection and execution ; and extreme care is also taken to train the heart in such a way as may inspire it to remain loyal to its own country, culture and tradition. In short, in the advanced countries education in all its bearings,—cognitive, affective and conative—is shaped to meet definite ends.

Unfortunately, in this land education falls far short of such a comprehensive ideal. It is absolutely unrelated to the life and environment of the people.

Lord Ronaldshay<sup>1</sup> in his *Heart of Aryavarta* observes, "The whole system of education is completely divorced from Indian culture and tradition. High school and undergraduate courses are essentially Western courses, unrelated to Indian life as it was lived before the advent of the British. They are rigidly mechanical, and altogether lack that intimate relationship between the teacher and the taught, which was an outstanding feature of the indigenous system. The university training of the Indian student 'is almost wholly unrelated to the real thoughts and aspirations of his mind'."

Education in this country does not touch important phases of pupils' development. It aims purely at developing only the intellect. Lord Ronaldshay in the same book observes :

"The (Sadler's) Commission was much struck by other contrasts between conditions in Bengal and in Great Britain. In the latter country education was many-sided. By far the greater number of students was engaged upon vocational courses, comparatively small proportion devoting itself to purely literary studies. Bengal, on the other hand, was 'unlike any other civilized country, in that so high a proportion of its educated classes set before them a university degree as the natural goal of ambition',

<sup>1</sup> Later, the Marquis of Zetland.

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a goal which they sought by means of 'studies which are almost purely literary in character, and which therefore provides scarcely any direct professional training'."

Thus, losing all faith in anything Indian and acquiring nothing that may be of any help in life's struggle, most of the young men come out of the university after an educational career extending over sixteen years. Cultural suicide and economic helplessness are found to be the inevitable results of such a system. And this is called high education!

Even the intellectual training imparted by the present system is far below the mark. Our schools are still sticking to unnatural, unscientific and even injurious methods which have long become obsolete in Western countries.

Thus want of education on the one hand has made the unnumbered masses a constant prey to disease, poverty and social tyranny, while improper education on the other has subjected the privileged few to physical deterioration, economic helplessness, cultural estrangement and often moral perversity. We shall realize the situation more clearly if we discuss some of the glaring omissions in the present system of education.

## II

### GLARING OMISSIONS PHYSICAL AND PRACTICAL

"What we want now is an immense awakening of *rājasika* energy, for the whole country is rapt in the shroud of *tamas*. The people of this land must be awakened—must be made fully active."

—Swami Vivekananda.

Any educational programme will remain hopelessly incomplete if special provisions are not made to make our people fully active. How to make our people healthy, strong, hardy, energetic, thoroughly practical and efficient is a great problem with us. The problem before the educationists of other lands is to direct the national energy, which is already vigorously at work, along channels most suited to the immediate aspirations of the nations. But here the problem begins with the awakening of the racial energy before it may be directed in any channel.

Looking at Bengal, one shudders to see how the race is becoming physically weak, lazy, ease-loving and fond of depending on others. Love for work has almost ceased to be a normal impulse. We work

only when we are compelled by necessity and even then we grudge, grumble and feel no scruple to deceive our task-masters by all sorts of unworthy tricks.

One does not receive, either at home or at school, any training that may instil into him a love for sound health as well as for active and well-regulated life. At home he grows mostly in surroundings divorced from all considerations of sanitary and aesthetic requirements. Laws of hygiene have scarcely anything to do with his food, clothes or surroundings. Physical exercise is usually set apart for specialization by stupid and unruly ones! What is more dangerous, he is usually relieved of all kinds of physical labour by his affectionate relatives or servants, and he is supposed to remain an everlasting baby in leading strings! Thus in most of our middle class homes body-building is left absolutely to nature's care, and the most elementary discipline of self-help in personal concerns is denied to the growing child. Naturally he becomes careless, irregular, unpractical, idle and often slovenly in his habits, and these habits become more deep-rooted when in college life he contracts a fancy for snobbery and a positive aversion for any kind of physical work.

In schools and colleges the education imparted is purely academic. The only ambition of the

guardians is to furnish their wards with degrees and the only business of educational institutions seems to be catering for this demand. The individual's growth is nobody's concern.

In an article published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Booker T. Washington, the late renowned Educationist and Negro Reformer of America, wrote :

“Education, which did not directly or indirectly connect itself with the practical and daily interests of daily life could hardly be called education... Education, far from being a means of escaping labour, is a means of raising up and dignifying labour, and thus indirectly a means of raising up and dignifying the common and ordinary man.”

On another occasion while addressing the students of the Tuskegee Institute he said :

“A race or an individual which has no fixed habits, no fixed place of abode, no time for going to bed, for getting up in the morning, for going to work, no arrangement, order or system in all the ordinary business of life, such a race, such an individual, are lacking in self-control, lacking in some of the fundamentals of civilization.”

We too are seriously lacking in some of the fundamentals of civilization, and our educational system seems to be blind to this fact. Our education

is absolutely unrelated to the practical and daily interest of our everyday life. A few extracts from a book entitled *Education in the Century*, published in the Nineteenth Century Series of America, are quoted below to show how educationists in the advanced countries became conscious of the importance of physical culture and training of the power of execution during the last century and made epoch-making changes in their old educational system :

“It was an epoch in the history of the race when the Universities in the last quarter of the century began to appoint professors of physical culture for the development of the bodily powers of their students. The time cannot be long delayed when physical development will be taken into consideration of the granting of University degrees.”

“Knowledge becomes power when its acquisition aids in the development of man’s executive tendency, when it is woven by self-activity into the individuality of men and women, and used by them as a means of revealing a greater selfhood.”

“Every element that enters into a man’s qualification for effective life-work along productive lines should receive training in educational institutions, and should be considered in its full relative value in making promotions from school to school, and in the

final gradation rank with which a man is turned out to begin his life-work."

"The greater advance in teaching was made when teachers realized that education was very imperfect, so long as the child was not trained to be executive along the lines of its special individual power or selfhood."

"Without the training of his executive power a child becomes a poor agent for good in any sphere...They are called unpractical; they are negative, not positive; they lack force and energy, and definiteness of purpose; they have not a true faith in their own selfhood; they do not recognize their own best power; they are shut into themselves, they fail to influence society, or the Church, or their national life for good, as they should do; they leave little evidence behind them when they die, that they have ever lived."

"The spread of the ideal, that the child should be trained in his operative power, has led to the almost universal adoption of manual training as a part of popular education in Europe and America. At first it was introduced for economic reasons; to qualify the child to make a living...At the end of the century men have learned to value manual training as an important educational agency for the development of brain power, for the co-ordination of

the brain and hand, for the culture of the observant powers, for the development of the power of definite, purposeful thought, for making the child a practical, self-active, independent, original being and for training his moral nature by preserving his creatively operative tendency, and stimulating him to productive effect.'

From the above it is clear how physical culture as well as development of the power of execution have become prominent factors of 'education' in the West. In the elementary schools of one of the states of Europe, children are made to sit in different drill-postures during different periods of the school-hour. Some sort of military drill and physical exercise are compulsory for all. They are now trying to find out a system of involuntary physical exercise for little babes, who have not begun to talk or even to walk. Then, for awakening practical aptitude the curriculum of every school provides for a graded course of manual work. Paper-folding, paper-cutting, paper-tearing, sand-work, clay-modelling, carpentry, painting form various items for manual work. This manual work is made more interesting and useful by co-ordinating it with text-book lessons or lessons on history and geography. Pupils are required to illustrate their lessons with their own models made of paper, cardboard, sand, clay, sticks

or other accessories. Hundreds of games have been introduced which develop the power of observation and quicken the inventive genius of every child and help him to be prompt, alert and precise. Besides all these, pupils are made to maintain a high standard of cleanliness with respect to their own persons and clothes. One with a shabby dress or unclean teeth is taken seriously to task at school. At home also even infants are trained to be neat, orderly and self-reliant. An infant casting off its shoes while strolling about the house is actually made to pick them up and follow the attendant and place them properly on the shoe-stand. The training in obedience and discipline which the children receive in this connection both at home and at school, and the awakening of a sense of self-respect and responsibility so early in their life, are undoubtedly mighty factors contributing immensely to the virility and efficiency of their national life.

The clue to this phase of Western education may be had from the following utterance of Booker T. Washington :

“Text-books are at best but tools, and in many cases ineffective tools, for the development of man...The teacher who with tact can teach his pupils to keep even threadbare clothes neatly brushed and free from grease spots is extending the school

influence into the home and is adding immeasurably to the self-respect of the home...The cleaning of rooms and washing of dishes have much to do with forming of characters."

We have to take a leaf out of their book. Our schools must make it incumbent upon them to develop the physique and train the power of execution of every child. Physical exercise, some sort of military drill, manual work, strict discipline for inculcating habits of cleanliness, regularity, punctuality and self-help—all these must find as much prominence in our schools as in those of the advanced countries. In this way our schools have to contribute a good deal towards making our people strong, active and efficient.

### III

## GLARING OMISSIONS (*Continued*)

### CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC

"What a fuss and fury about graduating, and after a few days all cooled down. And after all that, what is it they learn, but what religion and custom we have are all bad and what the Westerners have are all good. At last they cannot keep the wolf from the door."

—Swami Vivekananda.

We have already stated that education under the present system is not suited to the cultural and economic requirements of our people. Before suggesting improvements we need try to understand these requirements clearly.

India has a distinct culture of her own. The entire structure of her civilization rests on certain ideas and ideals of human life, which were discovered after many centuries of patient research by the sages (*rishis*) of old. These ideas and ideals are related to the spiritual growth of man.

It is on the growth of the inner man that the well-being of the individual as well as the society does depend. One has to rise triumphantly above its brute impulses before one may taste real happi-

ness or contribute substantially towards the happiness of others. As every individual wants happiness and every society wants peace, the life of every individual should be one continued struggle for self-purification, otherwise there cannot be peace or happiness for anybody. After self-purification one becomes truly divine. His higher self shines forth in all its splendour of boundless love, knowledge and bliss. This is the goal, the consummation of spiritual growth towards which every human being needs consciously advance.

Every phase of life in Hindu society was adjusted to meet this primary demand for spiritual growth. Such a social structure was raised that made it possible for every individual to contribute his maximum towards the common weal and at the same time to advance steadily towards perfection. Life was looked upon as an organic whole, and all its phases were regulated to advance both society as well as the individual towards an ideal perfection.

Social status was measured not by wealth or military prowess but by spiritual growth. The custodians of spirituality, namely, the Brahmanas, were placed on the top of the social scale. Arms, capital and labour represented by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras were all regulated by laws framed by the spiritually advanced group. The

various social groups were not allowed indefinitely to develop either military despotism, or commercial greed, or to lapse into servile inanity—the various social forces were controlled and directed towards the central demand of individual perfection and common weal. The life of every individual of the cultured classes was practically a graded course of renunciation and service through four stages of spiritual discipline. To the householder marriage was not a charter for sensuality, it was a necessary discipline for individual perfection as well as social well-being. Property was held as a trust and not merely as a means for endless sense-enjoyment. Men were not to live for the purpose of eating, drinking and making merry. They were not to spend their entire energy and stake their nobler instincts for mere material aggrandizement. Men were to eat so that they might live for the purpose of evolving spiritually. India realized that the inner man should not be starved for fattening the grosser self; for that is sure to bring sufferings to individual as well as collective life. So both the acquisition and use of wealth were so adjusted that they might not disturb the inner growth.

Right means of livelihood was an important code of this moral training. In the economic field strifes and struggles, fights and competitions were

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minimized to a degree. Each village community was made almost a self-contained unit. Different vocations were distributed among distinct caste-groups, and farming was an almost universal source of supplementary income. Bread-earning was made a smooth affair and everybody could find time for self-culture. Thus in the calm surroundings of villages lived our forefathers their simple, contented lives with the minimum of anxiety for bread-winning and maximum of devotion to spiritual growth.

Renunciation and service were made the channels through which our racial life has been flowing for thousands of years. Certainly there have been at times ebbs and even stagnation in this racial stream due to natural gravitation of our grosser self towards selfishness and sense-enjoyment. But spiritual leaders have never been too late to appear and inspire the race to march on its chosen path. Forms, ceremonials, details of social structure were, of course, readjusted from time to time to suit the demand of changed environments, but the ideals of human perfection, the principles of truth, purity, love and devotion and the methods of renunciation and service have never been forsaken.

At present we stand on the brink of a cultural catastrophe. The advanced nations of the world have dazzled us with their material prosperity and

we are being lured out of our cultural rut. With them wealth and power are first principles on which their civilization rests. Self-aggrandizement is the key-note of individual and national life. With many, religion is tending to be a ceremonial meant for diversion, and morality an accidental ornament of private life. Life is supposed to be bounded by the senses and intellect. The success of an individual or a nation is measured by the wealth it has hoarded or the power it wields over others. So instead of renunciation and service, self-aggrandizement and competition are the channels through which the modern nations move. Upon such a culture is based our present system of education. No wonder, therefore, that educated India under the hypnotic spell of modern education is about to receive this culture with open arms. Many of our educated countrymen do not find anything good or distinctive in Indian culture, and are prepared to reshape our entire socio-economic structure in the lathe of the modern nations.

While another section of our community, though clinging obstinately to every bit of forms and structural details, has lost sight of the central demand for spiritual growth through self-purification. Attachment to externals without a vision of spiritual life has given rise to a cultural paradox.

Hatred, jealousy, intolerance, cruelty, hypocrisy, selfishness are all masquerading in the name of religion. This has let loose disruptive forces within the community. Sects are fighting with sects and castes with castes because they have lost the thread of central unity. Individuals ignorant of the import of our glorious culture have become spiritually enfeebled, and the lower self is becoming uppermost in their thoughts. Without real spiritual culture everyday they are drawing closer and closer to a self-centred materialistic outlook of life, and they are becoming more and more liable to be swept off their cultural groove by any lure of wealth or power. The motion has already commenced and our present social structure is too dismantled to arrest this motion. One wing of our society is consciously leaving the central idea of spiritual growth, while from the fossilized fingers of the other wing the ideal is unconsciously slipping away. And there is no accepted authority within the land that can save the society from the impending danger of a thorough cultural alienation, which means extinction of this race.

Such is the state of our society when the combined industrialism of the advanced nations have made it well-nigh impossible to preserve the self-contained structure of our village community.

Science has wrought miracles. Foreign nations have actually become our next-door neighbours. Natural barriers can no longer insulate a country from the rest of the world. Economic life of a nation is no longer limited within a particular country. It has to reckon with the economic forces of the world. Even the cart-driver in an out-of-the-way Indian village has to shake hands with Mr. Ford of America and enlist himself in the army of motor-drivers. The American motor-prince presses him more heavily than his neighbouring cart-men !

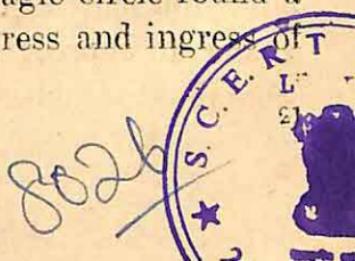
The entire world has literally become one huge market where competition alone determines the life or death of a nation. This world-market is practically held and controlled by the advanced nations. Ceaselessly to expand their economic domain seems to be their vital concern, and for this they are concentrating untold capital, raising the efficiency of labour by systematic training, utilizing applied science for economizing labour and building up gigantic organizations of industry and commerce. Every corner of the earth is being ransacked by them for raw materials and no contrivance is left untouched to find a market for their finished commodities.

Who can now draw a magic circle round a group of villages and stop the egress and ingress of

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commodities ! The people do not feel the necessity, as they have lost sight of the central principle of their village structure. Moreover, bread-problem has become extremely keen. Their age-old vocations do not pay ; they have to compete with foreign manufactures which are cheaper and more attractive. Plain living and high thinking is everyday becoming a thing of the past. Modern world has made our life complex and our tastes delicate. We are eager for fine things and we must have them cheap. With all our gates wide open to the cheap and attractive commodities of other lands, who can lock up the tastes and fancies of this vast nation within the four corners of ancient or even medieval India ? Porcelain, glass and enamel are replacing earthen ware ; the classic wheel of the potter is going to stop and find a place in the museum. Mills and factories produce cheap goods—they are going to dislodge our craftsmen. The weaver does not find a market for his textiles, nor can the blacksmith stick to his vocation. They must find out new avenues of income or they will die. For the sake of bare existence they are being driven out of their vocation and their village home probably to join the labour corps of some mills or factories. They will not mind leaving their social groove where they are unable to support themselves.

## GLARING OMISSIONS

Thus under the impact of modern economic forces India is slowly, yet surely gravitating towards big-scale industrialism. Mills and factories are springing up and they are actually attracting hordes of labourers from the peasantry and craftsmen. They seem to have come to stay and spread in this land like any other gift of modern science and accomplish the total disruption of our village structure. Many think seriously that under modern conditions we cannot live, unless we start *ad infinitum* big industries even with foreign capital and recast our entire socio-economic structure in the moulds of the advanced countries. The tidal wave of industrialism is thus advancing in rapid strides, and the people are not in a mood to resist it, nor in a position to do without it.

We are between the horns of a dilemma. It seems as if we cannot help courting industrialism for our very existence. Neither can we live without our cultural ideals which seem to be fundamentally opposed to industrialism. For industrialism is sure to usher in competition and fight within and outside the country. Modern history is a harrowing account of ceaseless fight between capital and labour, unscrupulous exploitation of weaker races on the point of bayonet, bloody struggles between advanced nations for industrial booty, systematic culture of

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greed, indolence, luxury and ferocity among dividend-holders, and degeneration of poor labourers into criminal types or human automatons. And these are the issues of industrialism. Industrialism brings bread, but it does not bring peace to humanity. How can we preserve our cultural ideals and yet accommodate this pernicious industrialism?

This is undoubtedly a puzzling problem and it has given rise to a good deal of controversy. One school of thinkers hold that we should give up our cultural ideals altogether and vote solidly for industrialism, without which, they believe, we are bound to be economically unfit for existence under modern conditions. While another school of thinkers prescribe that we should summarily dismiss industrialism as a bane of human civilization, stick to our own cultural ideals and revive our ancient socio-economic structure with or without any modification whatsoever. This wholesale rejection, either of industrialism or of our cultural ideals prescribed by the two opposing schools, cannot help us out of the impasse. A higher synthesis of the two contradictory elements and not a mere short-cut by eliminating one of them seems to be the only rational method of solving the problem.

We are perfectly confident that Swami Vivek-

ananda suggested such a rational procedure when he laid down the following injunction :

"Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now and decide. We are to put the chemicals together and the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws."

Industrialism versus civilization has become a world-problem. Gigantic labour movements on the Continent are trying to evolve new structures which can make a nation prosper without hurting anyone inside or outside it. Of these we have yet to see the result.

We, too, need try to solve the problem in our own way, not on paper but in the economic field. We have no authority to thrust any paper programme upon the society, which is lying at the mercy of the disruptive influence of modern socio-economic conditions as mentioned above. We cannot control the village market, we cannot eliminate competition with foreign goods. Nor can we command the tastes of our people, nor force them to remain within the vocational grooves of different castes. Lack of faith in our cultural ideals on the one hand and tremendous economic pressure on the other have set in a chaotic motion within the society. Who can arrest this motion now? The people alone can do it and

will do it only when they will be made to feel the necessity. The people are the only authority on whom the future of the country entirely depends. They have to be properly equipped and allowed to compare, contrast, reject, accept, modify and adopt things and finally find out a solution of the puzzling socio-economic problem.

Education, therefore, at the present moment is required, just to equip our people for this momentous experiment. The task of the educationist is to make our people culturally self-conscious by broadcasting spiritual ideas and ideals, and at the same time to throw open to them all the ways and means of economic well-being as yet discovered and leave them to a natural process of self-adjustment. Demand for spiritual growth and culture of all noble virtues that help this growth have again to be made vital factors of our life, and at the same time we have to be initiated into the mysteries of modern science.

Our country is mainly agricultural, so the educationist needs make it a point to enlighten everybody as to what science has contributed towards the improvement of agriculture. Our craftsmen immediately require a lift, so that they may produce cheaper and more attractive goods and cater for our changed tastes. Hence they need have a thorough

knowledge of what science has done for the improvement of home-industries by introducing hand-machines or small power machines. Education must make our masses conversant with up-to-date principles of hygiene and sanitation so that they may fight successfully with disease. They need know how co-operative organizations have worked miracles in other lands, and how these have actually commenced to work in this country.

These our people need immediately know, and along with all these they have to be taught to learn, adore, and practise the noble ideas and ideals of our glorious culture. The real spirit of religion adapted so nicely in Hinduism to suit various temperaments and stages of spiritual growth has again to be made a living theme of Hindu life. This is the dual task before the educationist, this is the equipment for the great experiment out of which will emerge a new socio-economic structure suited to our country.

For economic and cultural education, a well-directed and systematic training of the head, hand and heart is essential; vocational training and character-building must have an important place in any healthy scheme of education. The present system is conspicuous by the absence of such provision.

## IV

### WRONG METHODS

"Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life."

"Another thing that we want is the abolition of the system which aims at educating our boys in the same manner as that of the man who battered his ass, being advised that it could thereby be turned into a horse."

—Swami Vivekananda.

Even within the narrow limits of merely academic education the system in vogue in our country up to the middle of this century, appears to be very crude. Our school may very well be described as a tyrant's house where wagon-loads of information on various subjects are thrust upon young minds by a terroristic discipline and nobody cares to understand with sympathy even the obvious biological demands of the young ones. Hence, no amount of supplementary arrangements for developing their physique, efficiency and character will be of any avail unless they are released from the deadening pressure of the unscientific and unnatural methods of teaching, which are commonly practised in our ordinary schools.

Just like the growth of their tender limbs, the growth of the intellectual faculties of the children requires very careful and intelligent nursing. Each stage,—infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth,—has its peculiar characteristics, and the precise business of the teacher is to adjust the surroundings and activities of the pupil so that the latter may be gently led through all these stages and allowed to unfold, by a gradual and natural process, its various faculties like so many flower-blossoms. A child's mind has to be just helped to grow and not sawed, planed and chiselled like a plank of wood. The teacher's task is more like that of the gardener than that of the carpenter or mason.

Formerly education was supposed to resemble the work of a mason. Teachers presumed that they were to build in the pupil's mind an edifice of knowledge by piling up information on various subjects. Thus they used to thrust their own mature knowledge on the pupil's mind without doubting for a moment whether it was fit for receiving that. But, since the precious contributions of Pestalozzi and Froebel, meant specially for the education of little children, the entire educational system in the West has undergone a revolutionary change. Pedagogy has developed into a complete science and hundreds of experiments are being carried on there to make new

researches regarding correct methods of teaching, school-discipline, and all that.

Pestalozzi detected the fallacy of ignoring the pupil's mind as a subjective factor of education. Since then psychology of infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth has commenced to play a very important role in education and has become an interesting field of useful pedagogic research. The very function of education has been discovered to be mainly psychological in so far as it has been found to consist simply in helping the development of the inborn faculties and not in stuffing the brain with information. For such development, Pestalozzi recommended repeated exercise of the faculties.

Froebel added that such exercise of the faculties becomes effective only when it proceeds from voluntary efforts. Repeated voluntary exercise of a faculty is all that is required for its healthy development. The impulse for the exercise must come from within. This is absolutely essential. If it is done under compulsion, if, for instance, memory is exercised for fear of punishment, this, instead of developing the faculty, is sure to injure the brain by subjecting it to an abnormal strain.

This epoch-making discovery has made the teacher's task immensely complicated. For, to rouse self-activity, the teacher is required to have

an expert knowledge of the pupil's taste and capacity, which vary enormously with heredity, age and environment. Syllabus, routine, lessons, school-discipline have all to be based fundamentally on the psychological requirements of different groups of pupils classified at least according to age into four broad divisions, namely, infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth ; otherwise the very object of developing the faculties has every chance of being frustrated.

In the advanced countries of the West serious effort is put forth to make each particular lesson easy and interesting ; succeeding lessons are graduated according to the growing power of the pupil's mind ; lessons on different subjects are co-ordinated as far as possible to save specially little ones from unnecessary mental strain ; such pupils are led very gently from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the concrete to the abstract ; training of the senses, specially of sight and sound, is provided and firsthand observation is made to be the basis of nature-study ; training of the hand is imparted through manual work and this is made interesting by co-ordinating it with lessons on different subjects ; "learning through activity" is an important feature of modern child-education ; pictures, charts, models, maps, articles for object-

lessons, articles for interesting games, together with hundreds of devices are requisitioned for converting the education of children into a kind of highly amusing play which can easily stir up the self-activity of the pupils for the natural unfoldment of their inborn faculties.

The above does not suffice to give even a distant hint of the devoted attention, patient and systematic investigations and wonderful achievements of the huge army of educationists in the Western countries. Hundreds of books containing original contributions to various topics connected with school-education have already been published and strict measures are being adopted to put into practice at least the fundamental psychological principles. In some of the countries coercion of pupils has been penalized by legislation. In many of them teaching has been made a subject for study, in which one has to specialize and obtain the necessary certificate before one may be allowed to take up the profession of a teacher.

To sum up, the modern educationists in the advanced countries of the West are unanimous in believing that the child's brain is a highly delicate organ and therefore requires very careful handling ; that the teacher's business consists solely in helping the natural unfoldment of its latent faculties ; that

the teacher can help this process only by rousing self-activity of the pupils, which is the most potent and indispensable factor for a healthy development of their faculties; that this self-activity can be awakened only by loving and sympathetic attention to their actual need, taste and capacity; that syllabus, routine, methods of imparting lessons, school-discipline, all must conform primarily to the important psychological requirements of the pupils.

But in our country the state of things is quite different; although the authorities here are trying very slowly to improve school education in the light of the accepted methods of the advanced countries, we need not enter into any detailed comment to point out that in most of our schools pupils are still subjected to ideals and methods of education, which have long become obsolete in the West. Ideals and methods, which have absolutely no relation with the needs and capacities of the evolving mind of the pupil, may be called in this age of pedagogic enlightenment, simply barbarous. By inflicting this barbarous method upon the school-going population, we are perpetrating a horrible act of cruelty upon the young ones of the country; in the name of education we are unconsciously trampling upon their budding faculties, impeding their healthy growth and development of manhood. Our ignorance of modern

methods cannot be excused and permitted to exonerate this positively criminal offence in view of the vast array of pedagogic publications before us.

**AS IT SHOULD BE**



## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

“They cannot find light or Education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door bringing education to them?”

—Swami Vivekananda.

The late Mr. J. N. Gupta, M.A., I.C.S., the then Commissioner of the Presidency Division of Bengal, said in his presidential address before a divisional conference :

“As regards the condition of the vast majority of our brothers and sisters is it necessary for me to weary you with details? I am sure you are all more or less familiar with that dismal and depressing picture. We all know that our physique is extremely poor, the ordinary span of our lives regrettably short, mortality amongst children is heavier than that in most countries, that we are prey to decimating epidemics and diseases which not only kill but enervate the race, that the majority of our people have extremely small material resources and hardly sufficient nutrition to withstand the ravages

of disease, their poverty being due principally to the primitive and unprogressive condition of the staple industry of agriculture, and land having to bear an increasing burden from day to day on account of thoughtless multiplication of the people and the decay and disappearance of most of the rural industries ; and lastly, that the vast majority of our people are without any education, without any elementary knowledge of hygiene and health and without any higher standards of life—their entire resources and energy being consumed in meeting the clamant needs of the day. Of the total population of forty-seven millions of people of this province (Bengal) the above picture should apply roughly to forty-two millions.”

This was the condition, some twenty years back, of one of the major provinces of our mother-land ! Recent history is replete with more harrowing tales ! The toll of lives taken by the terrible Bengal famine and subsequent epidemics is a pointer to the precarious condition of the people.

Under such circumstances, surely, our masses cannot be in a mood to listen seriously to sermons of any kind from any quarter, unless the classes come down with intense sympathy for their sufferings and do all they can to help them out of ignorance and superstition, to raise and educate them, to better their material and economic condition and to make

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them fit partners in any worthy scheme of national regeneration. Obviously this is a Herculean task. Yet it does not behove us to remain indifferent to the vital needs of our masses, simply because the task is immense.

"Him I call a *mahâtman* whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *durâtman*", said Swami Vivekananda. We should serve with our hearts' blood the poor, the ignorant, the down-trodden, the disease-ridden inhabitants of this land, and try seriously to act up to the direction of the great patriot-saint of India. We have to concentrate our strength and resources on giving a lift to the masses. Our efforts and achievements may be inadequate for their immense needs, but honest and sincere efforts proceeding from intense feeling cannot go in vain. This will undoubtedly set the wheel rolling in the right direction.

If the few millions of this province, who are privileged to possess the material equipment of the twentieth century, can be really stirred, if they can be made conscious of their immediate duty of raising the masses to a decent standard of existence, the task, in spite of its immensity, will be accomplished in no time. The same thing holds good for each and every province of India. Such an attitude of the classes for serving the masses is essential before

even the Government may dream of realizing any scheme for the uplift of the masses.

In awakening this consciousness the Ramkrishna Mission has contributed a good deal by serving the people stricken with disease or smitten with poverty by temporary or permanent relief operations. It may very well be said that the Mission has already met with considerable success in transmitting the spirit of service to the upper strata of our people for relieving the distressed during floods, famines, and epidemics. So far as remedial measures are concerned now that several social service organizations have already taken the field and are doing their best, the time has surely come when they should seriously contribute their best towards preventive measures as well.

Education is undoubtedly one of the most effective and far-reaching preventive measures. A healthy man-making education adjusted, graded and distributed among all classes of people according to various needs and capacity can go a long way towards ensuring them against poverty, disease, premature mortality, tyranny of landlords, caste-lords, money-lenders as well as against sectarian and communal troubles of all sorts. Education is just the thing that is absolutely necessary to help this 'sleeping Leviathan' to stand on its feet. Education alone can

shape the units properly and weld them together into a strong, virile and self-sufficient nation that will be able to fulfil the mission of this land by disseminating her glorious culture among the nations of the world. Sister Nivedita indulged in no hyperbole when she said, "All things are possible to the educated and nothing whatever to the uneducated man."

The world is not in a mood to listen to the gospel of Love and Truth from an imbecile nation. The nation must be rejuvenated. It must demonstrate that its culture, far from being the cause of enervation, is something that infuses a higher order of strength and dexterity combining *brahma-teja* with *kshâtra-virya*; it must demonstrate by its actual achievements, and not merely by arguments and quotations from ancient history or the Purânas, that on the bedrock of its spiritual culture may be erected a civilization no less worthy and efficient in any sphere of life, social, economic or political, than any extant civilization on earth. This has to be demonstrated before India may be in a position to command the reverent attention of the world to listen to the glories of her culture. The modern world seriously believes that our Vedantic culture makes men 'other-worldly', that it has made our people hopelessly incompetent for the tasks of this life. This notion has to be corrected by practical demonstra-

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tion. For this, the nation has to stand on its feet, healthy, strong and efficient with tremendous faith in itself and its glorious culture. And this may be effected only after the people of this land are properly served with food—physical, intellectual and spiritual.

Indeed, serving India means literally to educate her people properly ; for, of all her problems there are none so grave “that are not to be solved by that magic word ‘education’ ”.

Let us, therefore, muster strong, concentrate all our available energy and resources to do something solid and substantial towards the permanent improvement of the conditions of our people by disseminating proper education. Let us not forget what Sister Nivedita said :

“We all know that the future of India depends for us on education...We know also that this education to be of any avail must extend through all degrees from its lowest and humblest applications up to the highest and most disinterested grades. We must have technical education and we must have also higher research...We must have education of women, as well as education of men. We must have secular education as well as religious. And almost more important than any of these we must have education of the people and for this, we must depend upon ourselves.”

## VI

### THE TASK BEFORE US

"When you have men who are ready to sacrifice their everything for their country, sincere to the backbone—when such men arise, India will become great in every respect. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance."

—Swami Vivekananda.

The task before us, so far as the spread of the right type of education in this land is concerned, is a tremendous one. The glaring omissions of the present system have to be made up, the wrong methods have to be corrected, and above all, education thus refined must be made to reach every corner of the country. It is to be seen that none is deprived of the benefits of a healthy system of education.

No doubt, this is a task that the Government of the country alone may handle. The Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education published by the Government in January, 1944 and commonly

known as the Sargent Report adumbrates a comprehensive scheme of all types and grades of education, starting with free and compulsory basic education of all boys and girls for a period of eight years. According to the opinion of the said Advisory Board a sum of about three hundred and twelve crores will have to be spent through a period of forty or fifty years to give full effect to the scheme. When that will be done the state of education in this country may very well be expected to be pitched up almost to the level of the advanced countries in the West.

But as yet the whole thing is no more than a vision. Who can say whether the scheme has come to be shelved or worked upon? Even if it be seriously taken up after the war, it will cover the lifetime of two generations to be completely translated into action. Under the circumstances and in view of the alarming state of education in the country, private organizations and even individuals with vision and initiative should not sit idle. Any effort right now, however humble that may be, from any quarter towards the qualitative as well as quantitative improvement of education is certainly a highly welcome thing.

The Wardha Scheme of basic education already in operation under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the auspices of the Indian National

Congress is surely a move in the right direction. The efforts of the late Rabindranath Tagore for the improvement and spread of education through the Santiniketan and Viswa Bharati, the idealistic endeavour of Sri Madanmohan Malavya in rearing up the Benares Hindu University, the achievements of the Arya Samaj in the reform and dissemination of education as well as those of the Ramkrishna Mission and some other organizations,—all these point unmistakably to the fact that the defects of the present system of education have become obvious to most of our thinkers and serious efforts are being made by many for mending them.

Yet it must be said that there is scope for hundred other organizations to come forward and take the field. The task is immense. And then, the efforts of the various organizations have to be co-ordinated as far as possible by a healthy exchange of views regarding working methods and ideals. The object before them all is the same, namely, the urgent improvement of the present system of education and the uplift of the masses by bringing the right type of education within their reach. And these two are inter-related. Unless the present system is improved to a degree, mass education will ever remain an unrealized dream.

Uplift of the masses being the principal requi-

site for any sound scheme of national regeneration, is surely the main and immediate object before us. And this can be attained only if the classes be trained to become conscious of their duty and responsibility towards the masses and be inspired to come down to serve them.

Thousands of workers will be required for the task ; therefore, the first thing necessary is to raise workers and equip them properly for the task. This was why Swami Vivekananda, in one of his lectures in Madras, emphasized the necessity of starting teacher-training institutions which would turn out teachers for carrying the right type of education to the masses.

In view of the immensity of the task Sister Nivedita suggested that we should organize an army of education ; just as in some of the Western countries every young man after completing his education has to give at least three years to military service, so in this country the youths should be required, after their education is over, to serve at least for three years for mass education. This suggestion points out clearly the immensity of the task and also shows how instead of wasting our energy only in stray efforts for mass education, we should try to inspire and equip the enlightened youths of this country for the service of the people and thus proceed

to make an organized and determined endeavour for raising the masses.

Surely, this has to be done and this should receive our primary attention. So long as the education army, as contemplated by Sister Nivedita, does not come into being or so long as the scheme of compulsory basic education proposed by the Central Advisory Board of Education in their report is not worked out, we have to work ceaselessly for firing the imagination of our educated youths, making them conscious of their duty to poor and ignorant villagers and rousing their enthusiasm for the sacred task of mass education.

Even this work is not an easy affair. Our enlightened youths cannot be easily led to feel and work for the people. The very education they receive in schools and colleges make them grow for a considerable period of their lives in educational hot-houses, entirely cut off from the rest of the society. The late Sir Brojendranath Seal pointed out this defect of the present system of education in course of his address before the Bombay University and suggested that some sort of practical work for the amelioration of the wretched conditions of the neighbouring slums should be incorporated in the university curricula of our country. The Sargent Report also recommends social service as an item

of education for the youths. This is undoubtedly a wise suggestion, but this is far less than what is required for improving this heartless system in order to prepare the individual for the uplift of the country.

The glaring omissions in the present system of education noted before show clearly how our young men are becoming unfit not only for improving their environment, but even for any effective life-work on productive lines. Their standard of life is raised, ambition pitched high, but, for most of them the scope for earning is hopelessly limited. Struggles for their own lives naturally become very keen and they cannot possibly spare any attention for other people. Moreover, lack of systematic culture of the heart makes it impossible for most of them even to feel any inclination for serving the masses. What is more dangerous, they become affected by snobbery that makes village life and association with poor people repulsive to their taste.

The present system, therefore, needs thorough overhauling ; at least the important omissions mentioned before have to be made up ; due attention has to be paid to physical culture, practical aptitude, economic efficiency, cultural integrity and training of the will and emotions on right lines, before one may dream of raising an army for mass education as suggested by Sister Nivedita.

We should, therefore, lose no time in supplementing the merely academic education in and through all institutions by positive measures for character-training and vocational education. This should engage our immediate attention. Without this the youths of the upper classes cannot be expected to be in a mood to feel for the masses, nor in a position to spare time and energy for serving them.

## VII

### CHARACTER-BUILDING

"We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library."

—Swami Vivekananda.

Education is a misnomer unless it helps one to build one's character. By character is meant training of the will, which implies strengthening the will and directing it properly. Will may be said to be a force on the mental plane having both magnitude as well as direction, and character-building signifies increasing the magnitude and adjusting the direction of this mental force. A man of character wills loftily and honestly as well as effectively,—he has the firmness to execute his will in spite of resistance from within or without.

It is interesting to note that character-building was given a prominent place in the Hindu scheme of education. It was recognized by our ancient educators to be the immediate aim of education ; for without character, without a thorough training of

the will, they observed correctly, no one can be fit for utilizing in life any knowledge that may have been imparted to him. Moreover they found that even to qualify anyone for acquiring knowledge of any kind a preliminary training of the will to a certain extent was a necessity. The mind as an important instrument of knowledge and as the main-spring of all actions drew the devoted attention of our early educationists more than anything else and they have left for us a precious lore about mental training, which we can ill afford to ignore.

Will is strengthened by the practice of concentration and self-control and chastened by a culture of refined and lofty sentiments. This is all that our ancients found essential for character-building, and perhaps no modern educationist can add a whit to this so far as the principle is concerned.

No less astounding was their discovery with regard to the method of imparting this training. The very conception of the *brahmacharya ashrama* reveals how our ancient educationists were conscious of the value and importance of 'self-activity' as an effective educational method and also of the potency of 'environment' for rousing self-activity.

In the light of our ancient teaching, we need attach more importance to character-building than to the stuffing of information in the pupil's brain,

which is tending to be the sole concern of the present educational institutions of our country.

For strengthening the will systematic practice of concentration and self-control must be provided for and it should be remembered that examples, and not mere oral instructions, are required of the teachers. This practice will also be of immense help in sharpening the intellect and developing different faculties. This must be looked upon as an indispensable factor of any healthy education.

Fickleness and irresoluteness are almost synonymous with restlessness of mind. Will-force is bound to be dissipated when the mind runs after too many things at a time. A mind agitated by too many thought-waves cannot be fixed on any object with unflinching devotion. Such a mind has to be calmed and mental energy has to be conserved before the mind may flow mightily in any given direction. For this a systematic practice of concentration is a necessity.

Self-control is a healthy exercise of the will against baser instinctive impulses, and undoubtedly this goes to develop the will considerably. Discipline of any kind is nothing but a lesson in self-control, and surely *brahmacharya* (continence), on account of its physiological as well as psychological effect, must be considered as the very basis of all

kinds of discipline. The various vows or *vratas* of our girls have their educational value in so far as they develop the will through self-control and they should find a place in any modern scheme for our girls' education, of course, with necessary modifications by way of eliminating crudities. Boys and young men also should be made to practise occasional fasting and silence. Moreover, struggles against instinctive inertia for maintaining a high standard of active, methodical and well-regulated life, as mentioned in the topic on practical education, will also contribute a good deal towards developing the will-power.

Now, besides strengthening the will we have to give it a proper direction, and for this the heart has to be chastened and inspired with noble sentiments. Verily, love excavates the channel along which will flows. Love for flesh, lucre and fame determines the will-path of the ordinary man of the world, while love for God, humanity, country and community directs the will of noble souls. A man is said to be elevated in proportion as his love for the little self is replaced by a higher form of love. Character-building, therefore, requires that pupils should be trained to feel for others, and their love should be gently led away from their little self, to higher and higher spheres, family, neighbours, community,

country and humanity, which are like so many "altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God". This will undoubtedly purify their heart and help them to be really noble and heroic in their deeds. Sister Nivedita gives an idea of the educational value of this love in the following words : "Even an ignorant mother, by teaching her boy to love and to act on his love, can be the finest of educators. It is this that makes so many of our great men of to-day attribute so much to their mothers."

Now, love is awakened by faith and developed by service. Children should be early taught to respect their parents and superiors and to perform everyday, as a rule, little acts of service by way of helping members of their families or schools as well as neighbours. The schoolmaster should make it a point to take note of these acts and encourage his pupils by awarding prizes for 'service'.

Pupils should be made conscious of their environment and helped to feel that their education is meant not for the good of themselves alone but also for the good of *jana-desa-dharma* (people, country and religion). They must be made to feel that their development is intended for the benefit of the environment. A healthy education must let them know that "no man liveth to himself alone", and it must stir up in them "the desire to serve, the long-

ing to better conditions, advance their fellows, and lift the whole". No education can be called national unless it inspires love for the country. Sister Nivedita writes emphatically, "Let love for country and countrymen, for people and soil, be the mould into which our lives flow hot."<sup>12</sup>

For this, the first thing necessary is to instil into the students a faith in their country and their people. A proper presentation of history which may introduce students to the glorious achievements of their forefathers, will certainly arouse their faith and admiration. They must be made conscious of the precious contributions of their motherland to religion and speculative philosophy and also of the propagation of her cultural ideals beyond the borders of India. They should also know how these contributions are valued by modern thinkers, how Vedānta philosophy as well as Buddhism have become important subjects of study and research in the modern academic circles of the West. Then our students should also be made to see for themselves, in the museums and art-galleries or through pictures and lantern-slides, the characteristic beauty of Indian painting, sculpture, and architecture, and in this connection they should be made familiar with the appreciative remarks of modern connoisseurs. For is there anyone whose heart is not filled with admira-

tion for the artistic genius of our ancestors when he reads or hears about the homage paid to it by noted art-critics like Mr. Havel and Mr. Percy Brown?

Then the students should be made to feel the grandeur of their early literature as well, specially of the two magnificent epics, and in this connection also they should be made to know how the literary merits of these early productions have been appreciated by modern critics. Our students have moreover to be made conscious of the contributions of our forefathers to positive sciences as described by Sir Brojendranath Seal and Sir P. C. Ray. They need also feel proud of the contributions of ancient India to political, economic and sociological science as contained in the *Shântiparva* of the *Mahâbhârata* and in *Kautilya-arthashâstra*, which have opened an immense and fruitful field of research before the modern scholars of this country.

All these will undoubtedly awaken faith in the country and love for the people. Every effort should be made to deepen the love thus awakened by training students to serve the people. Enrolling batches of students as volunteers for *sevâ* work during floods, famines, epidemics should be made a factor of our education.

In this way systematic efforts have to be made to rouse a burning love for their community and their

country. Emancipation of sympathy and intellect is, of course, a necessity. So while calling up love for their country or community, care must be taken to convince them of the fact that they have no reason to hate other communities or countries. They must be made to feel that under the diversities of faiths, customs, histories and traditions, the same human heart beats everywhere, and thus they should be led to feel for humanity as a whole. But in this we must always remember that one who cannot love his community cannot love his nation, and without loving the nation one cannot possibly feel any kinship with humanity.

More important than any one of these forms of love as a purifier of the heart is the love for God. All the remaining forms are comprehended in real love for God. One who can love God surely feels for all. Systematic efforts for developing love for God and religion should be made. This should be made the central gem as it were of the characteristic Hindu heart. Elucidation of our sacred texts, exposition of the lives and sayings of saints and seers, presentation of ideal spiritual lives from Purânas and History, excursion to holy places and holy men, spiritual lives of the teachers themselves and the spiritual environment of the school or residence of the students,—all these are necessary for

awakening this love. Moreover, the students have to be disciplined through specific courses of spiritual practice consisting of regular prayers, hymns and worship, graded according to their age and capacity.

These different forms, as it were, of love will go to chasten the heart and give a proper direction to the will. In this connection we need add that a development of the aesthetic sense is also a mighty agent for chastening the heart. Love for the beautiful is already in man ; this has to be drawn out by making the pupils feel and appreciate the beauties of Nature. They should be trained to observe and enjoy Nature's bounteous beauty by taking them to lovely spots during excursions. They are to be helped further to take delight in artistic expressions of the beautiful through poetry, music, painting, moulding or sculpture. Thus they should be encouraged and helped to express their own refined ideas and emotions through their own productions of fine arts. Regular lessons in drawing, painting, modelling, music, etc. go a long way to refine feelings. A flower garden in the school reared by students will be found to be highly useful in calling up the aesthetic sense. It must be noted that the environment of the school or residence of the students should be alive to aesthetic requirements.

## VIII

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING

"We need technical education and all else which may develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day."

—Swami Vivekananda.

Education should have both an individual and communal outlook. Every individual has to be helped to grow as much as it possibly can so that it may contribute its maximum towards the welfare of the community. At the same time the entire community has to be treated as an organic whole, and a proportionate growth of its various parts has to be provided for. These are the two-fold aims of a correct system of education.

Hundreds of vocations are required for a community in these days, and all of them do not require the same type of education, nor do they require the same measure of intellectual attainments. A system of education, that can help turning out men for the various necessary functions through different types and grades of training suited to the taste and capacity of each, is what a community requires for its

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well-being. Unfortunately, our present system seems to be entirely unrelated to this central demand.

Distribution of vocations in this country would be made in the past according to caste, and education would be likewise adjusted. But nowadays a vast change has come over our society. We talk now of the labour class, the middle class and the aristocracy as the three broad social divisions, of which the basis, one should note, is money and not caste. A new assortment of vocations among these three classes is coming into vogue, but no substantial measure has yet been taken to provide for corresponding education. What passes as education is purely an academic affair with very slight and inadequate exceptions.

It may safely be stated that the Primary and Minor schools in villages are meant mainly for the children of craftsmen and peasants, while High schools and colleges for those from the middle class and aristocracy. Nowhere in these schools and colleges is there any provision for specialization in vocations except in medicine, law and engineering which, however, are too costly for the poorer section of the community.

In the rural areas some of the castes, representing ancient trade-guilds, are still sticking to their

hereditary occupations. But they have no school where their boys may learn to improve their vocations in the light of modern scientific knowledge. What is worse, the Primary and Minor schools where they send their children have an adverse effect on the taste and outlook of the pupils. A boy sent there is almost invariably lost to his ancestral trade. Education in these institutions is somehow associated with aversion for manual labour. The process of education makes the boy from a labour class family more and more unfit for his father's trade.

This state of things has to be materially changed. The elementary and Minor schools in villages have to make provisions for compulsory vocational training. Agriculture in India being the mainstay of the labour class including even craftsmen, scientific agriculture, dairy-farming and agricultural industries should be made compulsory subjects for vocational training. Optional courses for various handicrafts<sup>2</sup> should be open to the pupils. While choosing the optional course the pupil may be encouraged to specialize in his father's trade, but certainly nothing should be forced upon him against his or his guardian's will. These vocational courses

<sup>2</sup> Such as weaving, tanning, carpentry, basket-making, toy-making, smithy, pottery, masonry, survey, repair of stoves, watches, cycles, musical instruments and various other articles of use, etc.

in village schools must necessarily be of an elementary nature and graded according to the age and capacity of the pupils. These village schools should be principally industrial schools, where academic education will be only a subsidiary factor.

High schools which are mainly intended for middle class boys should also provide for a higher standard of training in improved farming, commerce, banking, insurance, book-keeping, and modern industries such as chemical industries, motor mechanics, etc. High schools should be essentially academic and vocational training should be a subsidiary part of the curriculum, so that the boys may just develop a taste for practical work ; but there should be arrangements within these schools so that, after finishing the academic course, most of the boys may receive a thorough and systematic training in one or more of these vocational courses. Separate industrial schools may also serve the purpose ; but at the present stage when education in High schools and colleges has acquired peculiar prestige, industrial courses ought to be taught and patronized by these institutions. For this will go to dignify vocational training in the eyes of the pupils as well as guardians.

Such alliance with some sort of vocational training has an educational value of its own. Not only

does it go to enhance the bread-winning capacity of a man but also to make for his all-round growth. The power of understanding and the power of execution should go together. The idea of the do-nothing gentlemanly scholar came from the "slave-owning philosophers" of ancient Greece. The Hebrew system of education provided for an all-round growth by combining theory and practice. The Talmud declares, "He who does not teach his son a trade virtually teaches him to steal." Aldous Huxley remarks, "St. Paul was not only a scholar ; he was also a tent-maker." After the last war, Dr. A. E. Morgan introduced in Antioch college a system according to which periods of study alternated with periods of labour in "the factory, the office, the farm —even the prison and the asylum" ! Some such system has also been developed in the schools attached to factories in Soviet Russia.

Training the eyes, ears and hands of the pupils through interesting and purposeful hand-work and games goes not only to develop their will and executive ability but also to help a natural unfoldment of their faculties of understanding. A lesson in history, geography or even in literature becomes immensely interesting and easy if it be co-ordinated with some manual work or play transforming the contents of the lesson into suitable and equivalent

action. The modern 'project method', for instance, emphasizes the great educational value of such co-ordination.

Indeed, as the Sargent Report puts it, "The main principle of 'learning through activity' has been endorsed by educationists all over the world." It is a happy sign that in recent years India appears to have realized the necessity of revising the one-sided system of mere academic education in the light of this principle. The Wardha Scheme followed by the post-war scheme of education drawn by the Central Advisory Board of Education points unmistakably to this.

Let us quote at length some relevant remarks on the point from the Dr. Zakir Husain Committee Report, entitled *Basic National Education* and popularly known as the Wardha Scheme :

"Modern educational thought is practically unanimous in commending the idea of educating children through some suitable form of productive work. This method is considered to be the most effective approach to the problem of providing an integral all-sided education.

Psychologically, it is desirable, because it relieves the child from the tyranny of a purely academic and theoretical instruction against which its active nature is always making a healthy protest.

It Balances the intellectual and practical elements of experience and may be made an instrument of educating the body and the mind in co-ordination. The child acquires not the superficial literacy which implies, often without warrant, a capacity to read the printed page, but the far more important capacity of using hand and intelligence for some constructive purpose. This, if we may be permitted to use the expression, is 'the literacy of the whole personality'.

Socially considered, the introduction of such practical productive work in education, to be participated in by all the children of the nation, will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers, harmful alike for both. It will also cultivate in the only possible way a true sense of the dignity of labour and human solidarity—an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance.

Economically considered, carried out intelligently and efficiently, the scheme will increase the productive capacity of our workers and will also enable them to utilize their leisure advantageously.

From the strictly educational point of view, greater concreteness and reality can be given to the knowledge acquired by children by making some significant craft the basis of education. Knowledge

will thus become related to life, and its various aspects will be correlated with one another."

The Sargent Report lays down, "At the lower stages the activity will take many forms, leading gradually up to a basic craft or crafts suited to local conditions. So far as possible the whole of the curriculum will be harmonized with the general conception. The three R's by themselves can no longer be regarded as an adequate equipment for efficient citizenship." When a national system of compulsory basic education on such lines for eight years of all boys and girls of this country, as envisaged by this Report, will be a reality, a gigantic stride will be taken for improving education, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. At present it is only a vision, a worthy one no doubt. Till it is realized, the recommendations in this chapter and elsewhere in this book deserve the consideration of all who have the well-being of this country at heart as interim working formulae. Moreover, if the Primary, Middle and High schools are overhauled by private efforts along the lines suggested above, it will become easier for them to be fitted into and assimilated by the contemplated system when it comes to be introduced. Even after its introduction the proposed system will take, according to the estimate of the Central Advisory Board of Education, nothing less than

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

forty years to spread all over India. Till then are we to sit on our oars or apply the principle 'learning through activity' as far as we can under the present circumstances? The answer is obvious.

## IX

### BASIC THINGS

"The old institutions of living with the *guru* and similar systems of imparting education are needed."

"One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching."

—Swami Vivekananda.

The element of character-training, as has been already noted, must find an important place in any healthy scheme of education. We have also seen how the practice of concentration of mind and voluntary self-control together with the chastening of emotions go to magnify and properly direct the will and thereby build up what is called one's character or personality. Now, the main agencies that go to stimulate the pupils to achieve this end are the environment of the educational institution and the character and bearing of the teachers.

#### ENVIRONMENT

The place, its surroundings, the structures, furniture, and all that, constitute what is called the environment of an institution. The environment, really, is a very important element in the make-up

of an educational institution. By its silent but potent suggestions it exerts a tremendous influence on the impressionable minds of the pupils. In these days of psychological approach to the problems of education, environment and heredity are recognized as the two vital factors contributing to the growth of an individual. The environment of a place of education, therefore, ought to be made congenial to the desired growth of the pupils, and this should engage our foremost attention.

The will of the pupils has to be trained and they have to be made culturally self-conscious. These are the primary objectives of any desirable system of education. They are to grow up as Indians, as the worthy descendants of the *rishis* (seers) of old assimilating, of course, all that is good and conformable in the foreign cultural elements. Surely, it will be nothing less than fatal if education makes them helpless victims of cultural conquest by the West,—as is being done, unfortunately, by the present system. This state of things has to be radically altered for the very existence of our race. This is why it is high time that we go in for reviving some of our ancient methods and co-ordinate them with modern requirements in order to stop the process of cultural alienation.

In ancient India character-training was an

essential feature of education. The practice of concentration and self-control being the fundamental requisites of such training, the ancient *gurukulas* or *brahmacharya ashramas* would usually be lodged in quiet suburban or even rural areas, away from the city with its thousand and one causes of distraction. Spiritual growth being the basic demand, simple living and high thinking came to be the very key-notes of these *ashramas*. Unimposing cottages embosomed in beautiful natural surroundings would be the sole make-up of such institutions. And there the pupils would pass their days in communion with Nature and in the holy company of their teachers who were invariably persons of exalted character. Freed from sophistry and urban artificialities, they would lead pure and unostentatious lives. Everything in the environment would call up by healthy suggestions the nobler traits of the young minds. Everything would inspire peace and purity. Self-control, concentration of mind, and chastening of emotions would come to them almost naturally.

As character-training has again to be made the corner-stone of education, educational institutions, particularly the residential ones, must have environments congenial to such training as in the days of old. The ancient *gurukula* system has to be revived as far as that is possible.

It is common knowledge that dust, smoke, congestion, want of adequate light and air, as well as all sorts of death-dealing germs of fell diseases make cities physically unfit for the rearing up of the young ones. Then the hurry and scurry, din and bustle, and hundreds of distracting sights and sounds to be met with in the city tell mightily upon their mental health. It will be a criminal negligence, on our part, therefore, to remain any longer blind to the vital need of an adequate physical and mental setting of educational institutions for the healthy growth of the children of this soil. Educational institutions of all kinds should, as far as practicable, be removed from the positively pernicious environments of cities.

Then, in order to awaken the cultural self-consciousness of the pupils each institution must have a thoroughly Indian setting. The structures, the sitting arrangements, dress and meals, in fact everything about an institution must have a thoroughly Indian stamp. All things must conform to the cultural ideas and ideals of this land. The Indian way of doing things should, therefore, be observed as a rule, exception being made only where anything foreign is considered to possess unquestionably superior merit by sober judgment.

The Indian ideal is essentially spiritual. The

educational institutions must be tuned to this ideal. They must have simplicity and purity as their characteristic features. An air of holiness should pervade the atmosphere of such an institution. It should have the look from every angle of a sacred temple of learning, of which according to the Hindu point of view goddess *Saraswati* is the presiding deity.

The site-plan, the designs of structures must meet this central demand. There must be nothing that may possibly suggest the frivolous luxury of a garden-house or the mechanical and drab artificiality of a soldiers' barrack. Considerations of sanctity and simplicity, utility, economy and beauty must combine to produce a harmony against the natural background of a well-selected rural or suburban area.

Humble structures will be found to be more fitting in such surroundings than big mansions that have their place only in congested cities owing to the dearth of open land. Moreover, it should be remembered that living in such mansions may make the pupils, coming even from the lower middle class families, averse to going back to their own homes, and it may also stir up in them such ambitions as under the existing conditions of unemployment will scarcely have any chance of being fulfilled.

The houses should be simple, yet these and

their surroundings must always be kept scrupulously neat and tidy. Arrangements must be made for letting in plenty of light and fresh air. The whole thing should stand as a sort of object-lesson through which the pupils may learn how, when they grow up, they may improve the sanitary and aesthetic aspects of their own village homes, keeping themselves well within their probable incomes.

#### TEACHER

The next important thing in this connection is the character of the teacher. This also works as a potent factor of the environment on the pupils' minds by silent suggestions. The teacher must be simple and unassuming, honest, upright, bold and active if he is to inspire these virtues in his pupils. Mere talks are of little avail. An ounce of practice outweighs ten thousand tons of tall talks. Precept has absolutely no value unless it is backed up by example. It is a truism no doubt, yet in practice it is very often ignored.

As in these days education has come to be equated merely with academic knowledge, only those who are qualified to impart it are recognized as teachers. Their character is nobody's concern. It is exclusively a factor of their private life. This state of things has to be radically changed. We

must not forget that the goal of education is essentially man-making, character-building. The teachers, therefore, must be not only efficient in imparting academic knowledge according to modern methods, but also they must have the competence of stirring up the nobler instincts of the pupils under them. A teacher, therefore, must have a certificate of teaching along with that of a really sound character.

In ancient and medieval India the teachers were usually men of renunciation. The universities like those at Nalanda and Vikramashila were run by the monastic order. The *tols* or *chatushpâthis* even up to our days have been conducted by simple and spiritually inclined householders. While reorganizing education in this country on national lines, we should take note of this aspect of our national method and try to restore it as far as practicable.

The teacher will do well to take up his task with a spirit of renunciation and service. He must be a spiritual aspirant. He should be a noble and contented soul with as few wants as possible. It will be better if he is not made to barter knowledge for money. His wants may be met, as in the days of old, by the Government or other patrons of learning. His relationship with the pupils may in that case be saved from being tainted with commercial-

ism. According to the Hindu idea the teacher's relation with the pupil is as sacred as that of the father with his son. Considerations of money spoil the sanctity of such relations. Serious efforts should be made for devising suitable measures for preserving the sanctity of the teacher's relationship with his pupils.

A teacher with a 'blazing character' and freed from commercial taint can be expected to command the respect and admiration of the pupils and produce the necessary effect on their minds by way of helping them manifest the perfection that is already in them.

Such teachers alone are in a position to inspire in the pupils an attitude of voluntary submission so necessary for their growth on right lines. The present system of exacting submission by coercion has a baneful, demoralizing effect. "The true teacher", said Swami Vivekananda, "is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else."

## X

### BASIC THINGS (*continued*)

"The highest work can only degenerate when slave-labour produces it."

"All progress at the dictation of another...is valueless in my opinion."

—Swami Vivekananda.

#### LANGUAGE

Modern pedagogy is clear on the point that the child's faculties have to be made to unfold through the path of the least resistance. Every step must be an easy, interesting and natural one. There should be nothing in the way that may possibly bore the young learner. For, that would surely retard the natural growth of its faculties and injure the brain by an unwelcome pressure. Now, a child who is required to pick up a foreign language as a precondition of advancement in learning is subjected to such an obnoxious pressure. Such an unnatural demand positively impedes the growth of its faculties, depletes it of a good portion of its mental energy and dulls the edge of its intelligence. To the average child such a process of education cannot but appear as an immensely stiff and uninteresting job and look almost like a bugbear.

The present system of education in India hinges on having a foreign language as the medium of instruction and examination. Slight modifications here and there may have been made of late, but even now every child has to learn English and if it has to fare well in its educational career it has perforce to be well grounded in this foreign tongue quite early in life. This surely is a preposterous demand against all canons of modern pedagogy. With such a severe handicap the Indian student has to start. One shudders to think what a tremendous waste of national energy and parts is involved in this quixotic process.

This system must go lock, stock and barrel. We must realize, once for all, that nothing can be more prejudicial to the growth of the young ones than this positively pernicious system. Not only does it affect their brains adversely, stunts their intellectual growth and deals a death-blow to the power of original thinking by a process of forced cramming of foreign vocabulary and grammar, but also it goes a long way to make them easy victims of cultural conquest by an alien race. Nothing can be more reprehensible to the cause of nation-building in India than this measure introduced in the field of education by our political conquerors. Who can vouch that Macaulay's despatch was not a wily one

with the idea of cultural conquest lurking behind it? Whatever might have been the motive of the original sponsors of this system, there is no denying the fact that it has proved unmistakably to be a bane of the intellectual and cultural life of this land.

It is high time that we shake off our unnatural bias for any alien language. One's own vernacular is palpably the best medium of instruction. Not only that, right up to the end of school-education one should not have anything to do with any foreign language. Let the pupils have sufficient time to master their own language and literature and through these to acquire a fair general knowledge of all the subjects of the High school course. This will surely make for a natural growth of their faculties and add immensely to their intellectual power.

It is encouraging to note that the Sargent Report prescribes, "The medium of instruction in all High schools should be the mother-tongue of the pupils". But at the same time we cannot but join issue when it lays down, "English should be a compulsory second language". We find no reason, as we have stated above, why our High school students should be subjected to such an obviously mischievous requirement. Is it for carrying on our political and cultural slavery? It looks like a trap. Patriots need beware of this.

After finishing the High school course one may pick up a working knowledge of any foreign language through a short course as is done in the advanced countries. Therefore, no fuss should be made about learning fine English as a necessary and indispensable accomplishment even from one's childhood or adolescence.

Besides, Indian students during their High school course should learn the classical language which is closely related to their own vernacular. It is either Sanskrit or Arabic as the case may be. A fair knowledge of the corresponding classical language will surely help the mastery of their own vernacular, as the latter is derived ultimately from the former. Moreover, it will bring the pupils in close contact with their cultural heritage. The religion of the Hindus, for instance, is enshrined in Sanskrit texts. The Hindus will not be able to read their own Scriptures unless they learn Sanskrit. All their religious and even social ceremonies require them to recite Sanskrit hymns and formulae. Most certainly their education will remain incomplete, its cultural value will depreciate, its worth in social and religious life will become insignificant so long as they do not acquire a fair knowledge of Sanskrit. The same thing may be said of the Arabic in the case of a Moslem student. It will, therefore, be the

height of folly if the relevant classical language is omitted or even made merely an optional subject in the school-course. It must be a compulsory item on the list.

One other point in this connection deserves serious consideration. Should not our children be encouraged to learn another important Indian language other than their own vernacular? Should not they pick up what may be called a national lingua franca? Which particular vernacular of India will be recognized as such may be a controversial matter. But it is a fact that so far as Northern India is concerned Hindi and Urdu cover a wide area. Moreover, even in Bengal, for instance, one has to make contact with the Hindi-speaking people. A fair knowledge of either of these or of Hindusthani has immense practical value for a Bengali. This will stand him in good stead in the local market-place, in the office, in the railway station, etc. as well as when he goes to other parts of Northern India on pilgrimage or other business. Further, it is sure to bring about an inter-provincial solidarity. If the lead given by the Indian National Congress in choosing Hindusthani as the lingua franca be followed up and every school in India makes it a compulsory additional language, a long stride will be taken towards producing good-will, amity and harmony among the

provinces. This is an emergent step in the process of our national consolidation and should therefore be taken without any unnecessary delay.

It is to be seen that our education is related to our surroundings. This requires us to master our own vernacular, our classical language and our national lingua franca. This can be done only if we leave aside the study of any foreign language during the elementary and High school course and divert the energy required for this unnatural task to the three languages that concern us more intimately.

### DISCIPLINE

Discipline in educational institutions to be effective should be self-imposed as far as possible. It should better be induced by the environment and the character and bearing of the teachers than being enforced by coercion. Liberty, surely, is the best condition of growth. The maximum of liberty and the minimum of restraint from outside should be the working formula for ensuring the growth of real manhood. This is why even little children should be helped to develop their character "through self-government, through responsible co-operation, through the voluntarily accepted discipline of games" as far as that is possible.

Discipline of the strict, authoritarian type, on the other hand, to which our children are subjected, crushes their spirit and hampers the growth of their personality. Dr. Montessori is worth quoting in this connection ; she states, "The child who has never learned to act alone, to direct his own actions, to govern his own will, grows into an adult who is easily led and must always lean upon others. The school child, being continually discouraged and scolded, ends by acquiring that mixture of distrust of his own powers and of fear, which is called shyness and which later, in the grown man, takes the form of discouragement and submissiveness, of incapacity to put the slightest moral resistance. The obedience which is expected of a child both in the home and in the school—an obedience admitting neither of reason nor of justice—prepares the man to be docile to blind forces. The punishment, so common in schools, which consists in subjecting the culprit to public reprimand and is almost tantamount to the torture of the pillory, fills the souls with a crazy, unreasoning fear of public opinion, even an opinion manifestly unjust and false. In the midst of these adaptations and many others which set up a permanent inferiority complex, is born the spirit of devotion—not to say of idolatry—to the *condotieri*, the leaders." Indeed, as Mr. Aldous Huxley

puts it, "The traditional education is a training for life in a hierarchical, militaristic society, in which people are abjectly obedient to their superiors and inhuman to their inferiors. Each slave 'takes it out of' the slave below." This really is the unwholesome effect of the authoritarian type of discipline that is so much in vogue in our schools.

To ensure, therefore, the healthy and natural growth of manhood such discipline enforced from outside has to be substituted, as far as possible, by the salutary system of self-imposed discipline. It is interesting to note that the vows (*vratas*), the inspiring examples of the teacher's character together with other environmental influence associated with our ancient system were psychologically correct in so far as they would go to stir up voluntary efforts for self-control. The revival of that system under modern conditions appears to be an urgent need as has been noted in the foregoing chapter.

### EXAMINATION SYSTEM

The present system of examination is more a test of nerves than of intelligence. A single examination at the end of a course determining the future career of a student is looked upon by many as a crisis. All attention is focussed on the point.

Somehow to get through the examination becomes the sole concern of the students for several months preceding it. All canons of health and hygiene are abjured and 'burning midnight oil' becomes the rule with most of the examinees. Actually they stake their health and vitality for passing the examination. And this is not all. A premium appears to be set upon cramming all sorts of notes, 'digests', 'helps', 'guides', questions and answers. Swallowing these and disgorging them on the examination papers come to be all that is needed for getting through the crisis. The study of the subjects intended for the course boils down to such a ridiculous thing. And for this, the present system of examination is responsible.

And what is more, after such flimsy preparation when many among the candidates approach the examination hall, their nerves give way. Even students with sound preparation of their subjects having weak nerves get confused when they sit for examination and make a mess of it.

The remarks in the Wardha Scheme are worth quoting : "The system of examinations prevailing in our country has proved a curse to education. A bad system of education has, if possible, been made worse, by awarding to examinations a place out of all proportion to their utility. 'As a measure of the

work of individual pupils or the schools, by a consensus of expert opinion examinations are neither valid nor complete. They are inadequate and unreliable, capricious and arbitrary. We shall take care to guard the proposed system of general national education against their baneful influence."

Instead of a crucial examination at the end of a course it is high time that we should go in for arranging periodical tests and giving marks on the daily work in the class and the laboratory. Intelligence test should be made under normal conditions and not under an unusual state of nervous tension as required by the present system. Says Mr. Aldous Huxley in his *Ends and Means*, "Many educators agree in theory that a single crucial examination does not provide the best test of a person's ability. Many of them have even passed from theory to practice and are giving up the single, crucial examination in favour of a series of periodical tests of knowledge and intelligence and the reports, over a span of years, of teachers and inspectors." The purpose of examination may also be served to a great extent, as the Wardha Scheme points out, "by an administrative check of the work of the schools in a prescribed area by means of a sample measurement of the attainment of selected groups of students....."

## OUR EDUCATION

### COURSE

The courses of study prescribed by the Sargent Scheme are what they ought to be like. Free and compulsory basic education for eight years of all boys and girls with a bias for vocational training forms the country-wide base of the educational structure envisaged by this scheme. This is meant for children between the ages of six and fourteen and is split up into two stages, namely, the junior basic or Primary school covering the first five years and the senior basic or Middle school covering the remaining three years. "The main reason for this division", the Report says, "is that at about the age of eleven or twelve, with the onset of adolescence, certain mental and physical changes occur in boys and girls which necessitate a corresponding adjustment both in the content of the curriculum and in the methods of instruction." The senior basic course is intended to qualify a boy to pass out and "take his place in the community as a worker and as a future citizen". It is intended, however, that a boy leaving the senior basic school and going in for work "should be inspired with the desire to continue his education through such means as a national system of education may place at his disposal".

It should also be noted that, according to the

Scheme, various types of post-Primary schools other than the senior basic ones will come to provide a variety of courses extending over a period of at least five years after the age of eleven, that is, after the junior basic course is finished. "These courses", the Report says, "while preserving an essential cultural character, should be designed to prepare pupils for entry to industrial and commercial occupations as well as to Universities."

Only a few brilliant ones may go in for a three years' course in a High school after finishing the senior basic course. Some may join the High school after the junior basic stage is over and go through a course extending over six years. In either case a student is required to spend altogether at least eleven years from the beginning of his or her education to come to the end of the High school course. The syllabus of the High schools is to be so made as may enable the course to absorb one year out of the present Intermediate course. It is to be noted that a very careful selection is to be made in order to minimize the number of students going in for the High school course, the rest being absorbed in vocational occupations of various kinds. Another remarkable feature is the introduction of two parallel types of High schools, namely, academic and technical.

## OUR EDUCATION

Stringent measures are to be taken to select candidates for graduation, which is to consist of a three years' course. Even in the graduation course, post-graduate study and research departments academic, professional and technological education will be provided for on parallel lines according to the recommendations of the Sargent Report.

Thus, the educational structure designed by this scheme is like a pyramid with a broad country-wide base gradually tapering towards the apex as the number of students going up higher and higher beyond the senior basic stage becomes more and more limited at every stage. This is a worthy and well-considered scheme no doubt. But as long as it does not take shape, we have to follow the courses as they are found at the present moment, supplementing them, as far as circumstances permit, by innovations in the light of this well-devised scheme.

## BOOKS

It is encouraging to notice that of late the necessity of providing our students with good and useful books has come to be realized to some extent. With the growing aversion for the old methods of teaching that consisted in thrusting detailed and exhaustive information on various subjects in the pupils' minds, books on modern psychological lines

have been in demand. Right endeavour, however humble, is being made to bring out books designed to lead the pupils gently from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the concrete to the abstract. Instead of crowding and confusing their minds with all sorts of dull, uninteresting complexities right from the beginning, it is being gradually recognized that books must be easy and interesting so that they may attract the voluntary attention of the pupils. Language-primers based, for instance, on the Direct Method, have begun to appear. This is a promising sign. The efforts in this direction have to be intensified so that the bulk of such books may grow immensely and replace the old style ones entirely.

With the encouragement of out-study and rapid reading juvenile literature has commenced to grow. As in the textbooks so also in such literature the children must find interesting stories and information that may inspire them to be bold, active, enterprising, honest, truthful, selfless and generous.

Besides infusing into them a spirit of devotion to noble ideals, books have to awaken their cultural self-consciousness. They must know the elements of their religion on which their culture is based. They must be acquainted with the outstanding achievements on various fronts made by their an-

cestors. A correct presentation of history is sure to give them an insight into the genius of their race and rouse their faith (*shraddhā*) in themselves and in their hoary culture. It is a happy sign of our times that erudite historians of this country have stirred themselves up for preparing authentic history based on valued research on scientific lines. As these books are published, vernacular versions and selections suited to the requirements of various grades of students have to be brought out. This will surely go a long way to make our students culturally self-conscious and rid them of the canker of inferiority complex bred by an alien system of education, a canker that has been devitalizing our intelligentsia for a pretty long time.

## WOMEN'S EDUCATION

"The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita, and that is the only way."

"Any attempt to modernize our women, if it tries to take our women apart from that ideal of Sita is immediately a failure, as we see everyday."

—Swami Vivekananda.

Indian women have so many problems, but none so grave as may not be solved by "that magic word—Education". Surely they have to solve their own problems. Men cannot see things through women's eyes, and this is why they should not rush to the solution of women's problems. Women alone can understand their own needs, and they should therefore be left to themselves for initiating necessary reforms. In order to develop their efficiency for tackling with such a difficult and onerous task all that they require is education and that of the right type.

But what may possibly be the right type of education? What should be the aim and scope of the education that will meet the requirements of Indian women? Regarding this there is, at the present moment, a sharp conflict of opinions.

## OUR EDUCATION

While some among our enlightened women vote solidly for the present system of education, some others shudder to think of the inevitable cultural conquest coming in the train of such education. Both these view-points require a careful scrutiny in the light of modern thought currents as well as of age-old ideas and ideals before an impartial verdict on this controversial issue may possibly be arrived at.

This age is marked by a universal yearning for unbounded freedom. Not to speak of organized bodies, even individuals are out to extend their bounds of freedom. Those who have been oppressed and exploited for centuries have begun to assert their birthright of complete emancipation from all kinds of tyranny. No one wants any longer to remain contented in an inferior position. Absolute equality is the target aimed at by all who have been smarting under iniquitous discrimination of all sorts, social, political or economic.

Towards the close of the last century the women in the advanced countries of the West came to feel that all was not well in their relations with men. They discovered that men had so long been exploiting them and keeping them down in an inferior position. So, they ranged themselves as the

aggrieved party and went in for realizing their absolute equality with men.

The ball was set rolling probably by Ibsen, whose *A Doll's House*, came like an eye-opener to Western women regarding the depth of their abject submission to men's unwarranted domination. 'Ibsen Societies' spread over the Continent inspiring many among the fair sex to revolt against the tyranny of men. Bernard Shaw, perhaps, appeared not a day too late to speed up this phase of social revolution by his poignant writings. The suffragette movement of England, early in this century, may be cited as an outburst of this revolutionary urge of women for establishing their equality with men on a particular front.

The creed quickly spread like wild fire all over Europe and America and began to blaze for women in the Western society a path leading to a state of complete equality with men. Coming out of the traditional seclusion of their hearths and homes, women in the West have started competing with men in almost every walk of life. No field of activity is any longer marked out as a special preserve of men. The army and the police get their recruits from both the sexes. Even a revolt against nature appears to be just round the corner. Some openly look down upon motherhood as derogatory to

women's self-respect. Why should they suffer from an accident from which men invariably are immune? Does it not compromise their equality with men?

However, in most of the Western countries women have gained considerable ground in their race for equality with men. The progress made by them in different countries, of course, varies; but it does so only in degree and not in kind. It is gathered that war-minded Germany and Italy under Hitler and Mussolini set a premium on motherhood and enforced, for a time, the traditional position of women within the precincts of their homes. With the swing of the political fate of these two countries it is very likely that this temporary setback of women's equality with men will disappear. Russia is said to have gone the whole hog towards achieving individual freedom, particularly, in sex relations. Marriage instead of being a socio-religious institution is looked upon there merely as a legal fiction. It may last for a day, or even for a night and get easily dissolved without either of the parties having to prove anything serious against the other. Yet it is to be noticed that by permitting an individual to have only one partner at a time the Christian principle of monogamy has been scrupulously preserved! If, however, Bertrand Russell could have his way, even this requirement would be scrapped.

altogether, leaving men and women to come together just as they would like, instead of being worried by the antiquated vows of marriage. Who can say that, in the near future, Russell will not have a respectable following who would go in for an entirely novel order of things in the Western society? This, however, is a picture of the extreme left. Of course, the centre and the right are also there claiming, as is usual in other spheres, to be saner and more restrained in their demands. Yet, through all,—the left, the centre and the right,—women's bid for equality with men comes out as a universal social feature of this day in the Western world.

In the face of such revolutionary change in the outlook of Western women, may the Indian ones be expected to remain immune from its influence? Particularly in these days of easy communication when contact with the West has become so close, is it at all possible that Indian women will stand apart and lead an isolated life pursuing other ideas and ideals? Moreover, are not their own ideas and ideals crude and antiquated? Should not these be replaced by those imported from the progressive West? These are the honest doubts of a section of our enlightened women. Inspired by the examples of their Western sisters, they also are about to raise the standard of revolt against what they call the

tyranny of men. They appear to swear in the name of progressive change while hailing the social achievements of their Western confreres as something to be copied by all; and this, they seem seriously to believe, is the urgent demand of the hour. One failing or refusing to fall in line with them is put down as a hopeless fossil tied to the shackles of antediluvian tradition.

But there are some others among the educated women of our country who point out that what is food for one may be poison for another, what is good for Western women may not be so for the Indian ones. The progressive thoughts and achievements of the women in the West are related to their own past, to the ideas and ideals that have come to be particularly their own through the transmission of centuries. Their present outlook on life, has a historical background and certainly it cannot have a universal value. It may not fit in with the Indian scheme of life which also is the outcome of experiments and observation through scores of centuries. The ideals of Indian womanhood may be fundamentally different from those of their Western sisters. If it be so, what is counted in the West as progressive achievement in social relations may even prove injurious to Indian women having a different perspective of life.

The argument of this group of educated Indian women cannot be passed over lightly as that of tradition-bound fanatics. One has to pause and think seriously over what they say. Blind imitation of the West cannot surely be equated with social progress in our country. To copy anything modern may not be a step ahead. Everything the Western people claim to be good must be assessed in terms of Indian ideals before it may be accepted by our society. There is nothing essentially wrong or irrational in this stand.

On one occasion Swami Vivekananda remarked very caustically, "A child of but yesterday destined to die the day after tomorrow, comes to me and asks me to change all my plans and if I hear the advice of that baby and change all my surroundings according to his ideas I myself should be a fool, and no one else. Much of the advice that is coming to us from different countries is similar to this. Tell these wiseacres, 'I will hear you when you have made a stable society yourselves. You cannot hold on to an idea for two days, you quarrel and fail; you are born like moths in the spring and die like them in five minutes. You come up like bubbles and burst like bubbles too. First form a stable society like ours. First make laws and institutions that remain undiminished in their power through

scores of centuries. Then will be the time to talk on the subject with you, but till then, my friend, you are only a giddy child'.'<sup>2</sup>

What is worse, sometimes we ourselves become giddy at the sight of the powerful and prosperous West. Giving way to an inferiority complex, we rush to give more value to their social patterns than what these deserve on intrinsic merit. We forget that what they have achieved on their path of progress they themselves may very well have to discard in the light of their future observation. The glare of Western civilization, moreover, makes us blind to the fact that our society stands on the solid ground of spiritual ideals discovered through millenniums of patient research. Why should we dance to the tune of Western music? Why should we go up and down with the experimental vagaries of the modern nations? Should we not rather chalk out our own path strictly according to the requirements of our own ideas and ideals?

Our ideals are essentially spiritual. These determine our social framework from time to time according to varying social conditions. Man is born to advance spiritually and all adjustments in society have to be made to meet this central demand. This is the pivotal idea of our scheme of life. Complete emancipation from the bondage of nature,

external and internal, is the goal set for both men and women and it is to be achieved by well-directed efforts through successive births. Everyday one must see that it goes ahead on the path of complete mastery over the mind. One has to rise above passions and prejudice, cravings and aversions and make the mind clean and pure enough for manifesting the divinity within it. This is the direction towards which our steps are to be directed.

It should be noted that, based on the eternal verities of life and existence, such an ideal of spiritual progress is endowed with a universal value. It applies to mankind in general. It alone can assure the maximum of peace and well-being of the individual as well as of the society in any corner of the earth. This ideal chosen by the Indian *rishis* (sages) of old is something to be preserved for the well-being of the entire human society. It cannot and should not be cast away simply because it is not appreciated by the modern West. Not only should we preserve this and relate to it our activities on all fronts but we should also persist in propagating it over all lands for speeding up human progress towards universal peace and well-being.

However, spiritual progress being accepted here as the primary concern of life, it is incumbent upon us all that we should tread the path of selflessness.

The more does one get over its grabbing and domineering mind, the more does it get near divinity. This is why sacrifice of one's selfish interest in a spirit of service for the well-being of others has been made the very corner-stone of the Hindu scheme of life. To forgo and to serve has been, through the ages, the motto of the private as well as the public life of Hindusthan, and it is this that has determined the attitude of all in their various social relations. This is the key-note of the various kinds of *dharma* (religious duties) prescribed for individuals according to their stages of spiritual growth, stations in society, and relations with other individuals. Between the husband and the wife, the mother and the child,—the relation is one of mutual co-related duties. It is this duty-consciousness together with the consequent spirit of self-abnegation that makes for a calm, pure and peaceful life. It is, therefore, considered to be the indispensable pre-requisite of spiritual growth which has been accepted by Hindu India as the principal aim of human life.

Such duty-consciousness in all, according to their capacity, can be expected to bring about a state of peace, concord, co-operation, goodwill and harmony in the human society. The reverse of it is right-consciousness, which is very often bred by an inflation of the ego. Egged on by such ego, an

individual or group stands up to have the best of everything for itself. And for this, it demands unlimited freedom! Clashes and conflicts among individuals and groups naturally ensue. Competition, quarrel and fight become the order of the day. Human society with divine potentialities is reduced to a ghastly scene of jungle life! Egoism and selfishness, either individual or organized on communal, national or racial basis, lead us only to such a deplorable state.

Of course, consciousness of legitimate rights and even struggle for establishing them is not to be denounced. Such struggle is a perfectly righteous endeavour. As a matter of fact, the present bid for the freedom of groups and individuals has come by way of a natural reaction against the repression and exploitation through centuries of one party by another. There is nothing wrong about it. Tyranny of all kinds must go. No individual or group should be deprived of its right to grow physically, intellectually and spiritually. All barriers to such growth erected by interested parties have to be removed. So far it is all right.

Yet, while insisting on one's rights one must be vigilant lest it is entrapped by crass selfishness. The central aim of spiritual advancement through progressive selflessness should on no account be allow-

ed to be dimmed. One should remember that the clamour of the individual or group for glory, privilege, power and prosperity may not always be a righteous thing. It may be prompted by the grabbing and domineering instinct. So one has to draw a line between this and the righteous demand for freedom from real oppression. Moreover, one should also note that too much insistence on rights may blur our sense of duty. That will defeat the very spiritual purpose of life. Indeed, to fight for a righteous cause and yet to remain immune from hatred, jealousy, egoism and selfishness is a very difficult task with which only a person with a perfectly balanced mind can cope. At least the leaders in every society should have such a spiritual frame of mind. Otherwise we may be just moving in a vicious circle. Even fight for a righteous cause without such caution may eventually land us in the unregenerate brute plane.

Unfortunately, the spiritual aim of human life is not uppermost in the modern West. The lure of wealth and power has proved too strong for them to resist. Material prosperity has come to be the coveted goal of individuals and nations. And any means, however dirty, is welcome for reaching this goal. The move obviously is in the wrong direction. Cut off completely from the ancient and medieval spiri-

tual<sup>3</sup> moorings, the Western nations appear, at the moment, to be valuing material prosperity more than anything else and relying on brute force and all sorts of falsehood in the name of tact and diplomacy for achieving this paltry object.

If we start toeing the line with them, forgetting our spiritual legacy, we shall be lost for ever. We cannot afford to do that. For our very existence we have to hold aloft the banner of renunciation and service and march forward to our goal of spiritual perfection, each according to its capacity and stage of growth. Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo are not medieval cranks. They are modern intellectuals of no mean order,—yet through them one gets a glimpse of the Indian ideal of perfection. We must stick to this ideal and follow their lead. • We should never forget that on the human plane the spiritually fittest alone do survive.

Now, it is this spiritual ideal that Indian women have been following through the ages. Purity, simplicity, faithfulness and charity have all along been what they have been valuing more than any material thing. Faith in God, self-abnegation and service have marked their character, and chastity has been the guiding motto of their life. These are the natural concomitants of a spiritual outlook on life which is the *sine qua non* of Indian culture.

Even the peasant woman of Hindusthan is on a fairly high level of spiritual culture. Literate or illiterate, they are educated in a way. They have gathered spiritual strength denied to many high-soaring intellectuals. One unbiased Western lady with spiritual vision once remarked pertinently that Indian women, uneducated ones in the modern sense, could bear sons like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, while the enlightened mothers of the West could give birth at best to big statesmen, or generals. Indeed, it is remarkable that, so far, not a single woman of the West has had the glory of being a prophet's mother. However, the almost spontaneous, inherited spiritual culture of our unsophisticated village women should not be under-estimated and equated with crass ignorance.

Of course, they are ignorant of many useful items of modern knowledge and may be somewhat crude in their beliefs and practices. This state of things has surely to be improved by proper education. But nothing must come in to disturb their faith in spirit. Nothing should spoil their spiritual heritage. It must not be forgotten that even without education they are on the right road, while, unfortunately, many among the educated women of our day, losing their foothold on the correct path, are out merely to ape alien manners and customs and

direct their lives towards material ends. Little do these latter know that they are exchanging precious metals for trash, their lofty spiritual ideal for a handful of matter! Luckily, some among the educated ones also have withstood the shock of material civilization and remained loyal to their cultural ideals. They are calm, contented, humble, introspective, compassionate,—in a word, they are spiritually minded. They differ widely from the type of shallow, selfish, domineering, restless, volatile and pugnacious women with ill-digested superficial knowledge of everything on earth that passes as modern education and culture.

Swami Vivekananda, the patriot-saint of India, who had the eye to see through things and the acumen to compare and assess the values of different ideas and ideals, once remarked, "Still on this sacred soil of India, this land of Sita and Savitri, among women may be found such character, such spirit of service, such affection, such compassion, contentment and reverence, as I could not find anywhere else in the world. In the West, the women did not very often seem to be women at all, they appeared to be quite the replicas of men! Driving vehicles, drudging in offices, attending schools, doing professional duties! In India alone the sight of feminine modesty and reserve soothes the eye."

Yet the Swami's observation is out of date by at least half a century. One wonders how he would react at the sight of what modern women are doing in the name of equality with men.

This idea of equality, however, is not reprehensible, nor is it new to us. It is deep-rooted in our culture. We hold that the soul is beyond sex. It is the same in the man and the woman. The differentiation comes with the body, which is no more than an external form. The Supreme Spirit (*Paramātmā*) appears as the individual soul (*jivātmā*) and also projects all the multitudinous forms, gross and subtle, that we sum up and call nature. Every moment, nature is an aggregate of infinite new forms on the same eternal substance, the Supreme Spirit. This Vedantic teaching of unity in diversity is the secret of the beauty and harmony in nature. He is in all. Everything is holy. Everything has its individuality in form and function to add to the beauty and contribute towards the harmony of the whole. Everything has its indubitable value within the total scheme.

This central fact has to be recognized, all things in nature have to be regarded in this perspective, before we may expect to find peace which is the goal of all social endeavour. It is the harmony of varied things and not their dull uniformity that creates the

superb beauty of nature. So, equality in form or function should not be the aim, for that will lead to deadening uniformity and frustrate the very object of nature in throwing up varieties. Yet, in spite of varying forms and functions, individuals or groups must have, on the strength of their essential divinity, perfect equality so far as prestige and privilege are concerned. One must not go in for usurping what naturally belongs to another, nor should one forget the sanctity of the humblest thing and give way to a feeling of superiority. These are the twin secrets of concord and well-being. And these are based on the great truth of the essential oneness in the divinity of all.

The very first verse of *Isha*, the oldest of the Upanishads, declares, "Everything ephemeral in nature is to be regarded as pervaded by God ; hence enjoy it all through a spirit of renunciation, don't covet what belongs to another." The secret of social equilibrium is laid down in this verse. As everything in nature is pervaded by God, there is no room for arrogance, hatred, jealousy, greed and exploitation. It is ignorance of the essential oneness that gives rise to all these and brings about discord and misery. We must beware of this.

Man must see in woman a manifestation of divinity and have due regard for her. He must not

do anything that may stand in the way of her natural growth. He must not consider her as an inferior in any way and look down upon her as an object of pity. She has her own strength, her own function and her own place in the scheme of nature. And she also, in her turn, ought to be particular not to go in for usurping what is outside her normal line of growth. That will disturb the balance and spoil the harmony of the society.

This was the approach of our ancients towards this problem. In our ancient Vedic society the wife was an equal partner in the religious life (*sahadharmini*) of the householder. Even now she holds the respected position of the matron of a family. Motherhood is her ideal. To bear and rear up children, to love all, to serve all, to look to everybody's well-being, to run or supervise all domestic business, to mediate in quarrels and preserve the peace and harmony of the household as well as of the neighbourhood,—these compose her sacred task. And for this the mother has a place of honour in the society. She is not a mere toy to be played with by a sensual husband. She is infinitely more than that. Through her is manifested divine love in the form of mother's affection, characterized by infinite forbearance and forgiveness. Her patience, her sacrifice, her earnest solicitude for the well-being of the children have no

parallel. Indeed, she alone possesses the cream of human kindness. Every woman is endowed with the potentiality of developing all these and becoming a veritable angel on earth when she becomes a mother, and a spiritually-minded one at that.

This ideal of motherhood has been before Indian women through the ages. Their position has all along been one not only of equality with men but also of particular prestige and dignity. Men have been enjoined to look upon all women other than one's wife as the Divine Mother. Made conscious of this position, women have been trained to regard their youth and physical beauty as the least part of their being. Developing and expressing, through their deportment, the benign attitude of the mother towards all but the husband have constituted the special line of their growth. This is why age and experience of women allowing such development have come to be honoured in our society more than their youth and physical charm. Here is a striking contrast with the modern outlook of Western women who prize their youth and external beauty more than anything else in their possession. Indian women are required, however, to enhance the beauty and sublimity of their character through sacrifice and service in order to ensure their dignified position in society.

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Even now, Sita and Savitri, Gargi and Maitreyi, Khana and Lilavati, Sanghamitta and Mira Bai are names to conjure with. As feminine models of outstanding attainments in various fields that ancient and medieval India has left as a legacy, they still receive the unstinted homage of the people of Hindusthan. Representing our eternal cultural ideals, they stand out as luminous exemplars of Indian women on our national consciousness. They point unmistakably to the direction in which Indian women of this day have to move for preserving their racial individuality.

Surely, the idea of the divinity of women has not yet been effaced from the national mind, but unfortunately, it is not as much operative at the moment as it was in the past. The lofty ideal of Indian womanhood has become somewhat dim in our days. The Indian women of this day do not stand on the pedestal they have been occupying through the ages. Various circumstances have combined to bring about such a deplorable state of things.

The necessity, for instance, of protecting our women from the hands of barbarians for centuries made them weak, helpless and dependent. Swami Vivekananda rightly pointed out, "They have all the time been trained in helplessness, servile depen-

dence on others, and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger." And why have they been reduced to such a miserable state of existence? Surely not because the idea of their equality with men has been absent in our national consciousness. Not because they have all along been kept down in an inferior position by the tyranny of men. Such a reading does not fit in with our spiritual ideas and ideals nor with the outstanding examples of exalted women in ancient and medieval India. Obviously it will be wrong and hasty to jump to such a conclusion. The cause of the present condition of our women has to be traced elsewhere. Swami Vivekananda points to this when he says, "We should not allow the sudden influx of European criticism, and our consequent sense of contrast, to make us acquiesce too readily in the notion of the inequality of our women. Circumstances have forced upon us, for many centuries, the woman's need of protection. This, and not her inferiority is the true reading of our customs."

However, the age of barbarian outrage is over. The social condition that brought about this helpless state of Indian women has changed. It is high time, therefore, that efforts are made to help them out of this abject state of dependence and restore

them to their honoured position of essential equality with men as in the days of old. We should remember that they have the potentiality of becoming as bold, resolute, self-reliant and heroic in their demeanour as the Kshatriya heroines of old or the intrepid Rajput ladies of the medieval age. This is in their blood. The present phase of weakness is only a temporary aberration. We should have immense faith in their potential strength and proceed very cautiously to help them manifest it over again. While doing this, we must not forget the fact that the source of their strength lies, as in the days of old, in faith,—faith in themselves, faith in God and their religion, as well as in unflinching devotion to their supreme ideal of chastity. Educationists will do well to note that the character of Indian women will have to be built on such a rocky foundation. If suitable provisions are made for this, we may be sure that Indian women will develop again the heroic side of their character without losing their spiritual balance, and quickly pass out of the present state of miserable existence.

Another potent factor that has contributed towards the present undesirable condition of Indian women is the phase of spiritual decadence through which we have been passing for a fairly long time. This together with our close contact with the

dazzling, materialistic civilization of alien origin went far to shake our faith in our ancient wisdom and to slacken our grasp on our own cultural ideals. The spiritual ideas and ideals associated with Indian womanhood almost faded out from our blurred vision.

But, happily, this has been only a passing phase. The cultural self-consciousness of our people has again been stirred up. A rising tide of spirituality has already commenced to surge forward. It promises to sweep before it all our present doubts, misgivings, misunderstandings and confusions regarding the value and significance of the spiritual ideas and ideals that have been guiding this hoary race through millenniums. With the inevitable awakening of our cultural self-consciousness the ancient, lofty ideal of Indian womanhood may very well be expected to shine over again in its pristine glory.

Another indisputable cause of the present inferior position of our women is their decidedly lower level of intellectual culture, particularly in the upper strata of our society. The marked difference of intellectual level between the two wings of our society is due to their egregiously unequal facilities for education. Educated men with almost illiterate wives are quite common among our middle class

people. Naturally such men very often develop a superiority complex towards their uneducated better halves. The condition of women under such circumstances is anything but covetable. They are dominated by their intellectually advanced partners of life and held down permanently in an inferior position.

The recent move for women's education is meant palpably for mending this defect. By levelling up the intellectual life of the two wings, it aims at equalizing their status. Surely, the objective is all right. This unnatural state of unequal intellectual growth should no longer be allowed to continue.

But is the method adopted by us for attaining this end a suitable one? May the present system of negative education, that is entirely unrelated to our environment and our cultural ideals, be expected to produce the desired effect? If women also, who have so long been holding fast to and preserving in a way our spiritual scheme of life, be victimized equally with men by the positively denationalizing influence of the present hybrid system of education, will not our people lose more than what they will gain by this endeavour? This is a poser of very great import. It concerns us vitally and should not, therefore, be lightly dispensed with. The

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very existence of this race with its individuality depends on a wise choice of method regarding our women's education. Alien culture let freely into our society may play havoc. We must beware of this. We must have adequate safeguards for protecting at least our women from cultural alienation resulting from any thoughtless system of education.

Undoubtedly, for a healthy resurgence of our national life the present system of education requires drastic reforms. Till it is so reformed, till education in this land becomes related to its age-old cultural ideals, we shall do well to keep at least our women at a safe distance from the range of its baneful influence. Yet, we cannot wait a moment longer to raise their intellectual level. How we may do this without in the least disturbing their loyalty to our cultural ideals is the problem before us, and a very urgent one. It is imperative that we should devise forthwith some other system of education for our women that may ensure their intellectual growth along national lines. This is an emergent task for all social service organizations within this land. It is very likely that if they take it up earnestly a national system of women's education will soon emerge out of their various experiments.

The objective is clear. Our women's education should primarily aim at equipping them properly

with all that modern knowledge may bestow for realizing intelligently their national ideal of motherhood. To cater for domestic bliss should continue to be the chief function of the average Indian woman's life. Social service of a type suited to womanly temperament should, moreover, remain one of the chosen fields of their activity. Some may have to earn for their livelihood. That may be done by teaching in Nursery schools, Primary schools and girls' schools and colleges, nursing in hospitals and maternity homes, producing handicrafts at home or through cottage industries. They need not invade men's sphere of activity and become masculine in their bearing. That will be straying away from the Indian ideal. They have to maintain their feminine charm and modesty, their peculiar function and dignity in order to keep up the balance and harmony of our society.

Hence their education must be so devised as may instil into them, in the first place, an admiration and regard for and consequent loyalty to their national ideals of purity, simplicity, self-sacrifice, motherly tenderness and love, untiring patience and contentment. Secondly, it should develop their intellectual faculties so that they may have a rational grasp on the correct import of their cultural ideas and ideals and may intelligently tackle the various

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problems connected with their domestic and social life. Thirdly, their education should enable them to earn something in their own way without having to stir out of their own spheres, if and when such earning becomes a necessity for their livelihood.

Swami Vivekananda had certain definite ideas regarding the type of education that may suit the requirements of Indian women. Once he said, "Religion, arts, sciences, house-keeping, cooking, sewing, hygiene,—the simple essential points of these subjects ought to be taught to our women. It is not good to let them touch novels and fictions ... But only teaching rites of worship won't do; their education must be an eye-opener in all matters. Ideal characters must always be presented before the view of the girls to imbue them with a devotion for lofty ideals of selflessness. The noble examples of Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Lilavati, Khana and Mira should be brought home to their minds and they should be inspired to mould their lives after them." On another occasion he laid down, "History and the Purânas, house-keeping and the arts, the duties of home-life and the principles that make for the development of an ideal character, have to be taught with the help of modern science, and lady students must be trained up in ethical and spiritual life. We must see to their growing up as

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ideal matrons of home in time."

It may very well be assumed that a basic education course of eight years adapted to the requirements of Indian women will be sufficient for the vast majority of our girls. A few with better parts and opportunities may complete a course equivalent to the present High school standard and qualify, if they so desire, as teachers or nurses. All girls from the Primary school upward should get a training in drawing, painting, moulding, music, and such other fine arts, as well as in producing artistic handicrafts. All these together with a special emphasis on domestic sciences should always be the distinctive feature of girls' education in India right up to the end of the High school course. It is encouraging to notice that the Sargent Report recommends the inclusion of domestic science as a compulsory subject for all High school girls. As discussed before, the medium of instruction should always be their own vernacular, and they should pick up a fair acquaintance with their own classical language as well as with one important Indian vernacular other than their own before they leave the High school. Literature, history, geography and elementary science together with elementary mathematics should, of course, be included in their syllabus in order to extend their intellectual horizon

and to equip them with the fundamentals of modern knowledge. While selecting books on literature and compiling textbooks of history, serious endeavour should be made to see that these may go to inspire the girls with tremendous faith in their own cultural ideals. All that has been said in this book in connection with physical culture, character-building and 'basic things' should be seriously considered while casting a programme for girls' education. With suitable modifications, the recommendations should be incorporated as far as possible in the scheme of women's education. We shall do well to remember that it will be perilous to compromise with foreign ideas and ideals when we proceed to devise our own scheme of women's education.

These are the fundamentals of the basic education course of eight years meant for the overwhelming majority of our girls and of the High school course meant for a few of them. Through actual experiments different social service organizations within this country will surely have the scope of working out the details in diverse ways suited to various local requirements or group interests.

A limited few, however, with outstanding parts should have facilities for higher education, so that some of them may qualify, if they so desire, as

lady doctors, matrons of hospitals, teachers of girls' High schools and as professors of girls' colleges. Undoubtedly it will be a great achievement if a suitable course of higher education may be evolved through the experiments of the social service organizations devoted to the cause of education.

It is clear that, so long as the present system of education is not radically reformed, we must have separate institutions for our girls with distinct courses of education ranging from the lowest to the highest standard. So the question of co-education does not arise. Yet a word about that will not be out of place, having regard to the fact that it has very recently come to be a feature of our present system. Should we not take note of the report that co-education has lately been discarded in a country like Russia where women are supposed to have more liberty than, perhaps, anywhere else in the world? It is a fact, moreover, that the Sargent Report does not prescribe co-education above the junior basic stage of the girls, that is, above their age of eleven. This appears to be a sound recipe. Nursery and Primary schools under women teachers may, of course, continue to be mixed ones.

This Report further recommends that girls above the junior basic (that is, Primary) stage ought to be placed under women teachers as far as that is

possible. Swami Vivekananda would have them exclusively under lady teachers. In this connection the Swami said, "The duty of teaching in the school (for girls) ought to devolve absolutely on educated widows and *brahmachārinis*. It is good to avoid in this country any association of men with women's schools."

Education so devised and spread among our women may surely be expected to give them the badly needed lift and thus restore a healthy and well-balanced state of our society. With the right kind of education they will be able to solve their outstanding problems that have been crying for solution for a pretty long time. Not a day should, therefore, be lost in introducing and disseminating such education among our women.

The task is immense. A vast number of women with necessary educational qualification and sterling character have to be raised before we may think of coping with the task. Hence the starting of institutions where such teachers may be trained should engage our immediate attention. These institutions may serve, moreover, as experimental stations for finding out the details regarding the different courses suited to our girls of different age-groups. If different social service organizations within this land take up this task in right earnest,

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a number of such teacher-training institutions may crop up in various parts of the country and through them a good deal of spade-work may be done for inaugurating an ideal system of education suited to the genius and requirements of Indian women.

Until such a system is introduced the present rush of Indian girls to existing institutions cannot surely be stopped or even appreciably checked. The pressure of circumstances has compelled them to seek the intellectual level of men by forcing open the portals of the existing educational institutions. This is a perfectly natural movement urged by a real need of intellectual parity between the two wings of the society, and cannot, therefore, be stilled by a fiat. Yet it is a fact that the existing institutions cannot but lead them astray from their own cultural ideals. They may get out of this impasse only when an ideal system of education suited to their requirements is inaugurated. So the advent of such a system has to be speeded up by all means and till such a consummation the evils of the present system have to be minimized by suitable supplementary training as discussed in the following section.

## XII

### IMMEDIATE APPROACH

The defects of the present system of education as well as how they are to be mended have been discussed. Many patriotic thinkers of this land have already felt keenly the urgent need of reforming this system and have started doing some work along the line through suitable organizations. Of course, compared to the immensity of the task before us such isolated efforts by individuals and organizations according to their own light and resources are not adequate, though it must be admitted that each of these efforts is a hopeful sign of our national revival.

So long as a healthier system suited to the genius and requirements of our people is not introduced by the Government, such efforts by private organizations should continue and multiply. Each organization should seriously consider how far it may possibly contribute towards improving the present system of education. It is obvious that with the resources that may probably be at their disposal it will be difficult for most of them to start and conduct independent *universities* for disseminating

the right type of education. Nor will it be possible for many of them to make any direct effort towards reforming the present system by convincing the existing educational authorities of the necessity of such reform.

Each can, however, profitably utilize, at the present moment, its strength and resources by rearing up different types of educational institutions within the framework of the modern system, which by turning out healthier stuff may act as a moral corrective on the educational authorities of the land and also serve as models to other social service organizations. These institutions may moreover be able to turn out at least some men who will not mind retiring to villages with unostentatious vocations of teaching in High schools or farming or running home-industries. Such men can be expected to be of immense help for the spread of education among the masses. They may, with the help of local boys and youths, conduct, during leisure hours, night schools, gymnasiums and libraries, deliver lantern lectures, set up museums and demonstration farms and organize exhibitions and healthy competitions. One such able man can moreover guide, control and inspire the teachers of a number of elementary schools in the neighbourhood. Their activities for mass education will also serve as examples and

inspire others to work on the line in adjacent villages.

So we see that such educational institutions, if properly reared up by any national organization, will serve three useful objects, namely, they will exert a moral influence on the existing stereotyped institutions ; they will serve as models to be copied and improved upon by other social service organizations in the land ; they will turn out at least some men who may start and carry on model educational works for the masses. In addition to all these it may be just possible for such institutions to turn out at least a few who will be fired by the idealism of dedicating their lives entirely to the sacred task of uplifting the masses.

We are glad that by the grace of God already a number of different types of educational institutions have started growing under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission and other social service organizations within the land. Our obvious duty at present is to see that each of them grows into a model of its type and advances steadily towards fulfilling the objects stated above. Every one of them must aim primarily at making up the deficiencies of the present system by supplementary extra-curricular courses of training. We must not, on any account, waste our energy after maintaining even

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a single institution run on stereotyped lines. If we spend our energy after any institution, we should leave no stone unturned to make it essentially man-making.

## XIII

### TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

#### LEISURE HOUR TRAINING AND HOSTELS

While building up model types for improving the education of the upper and middle class children and youths, we should remember that our first business is to rectify the glaring defects of the present system by supplementary measures. It is obvious that for imparting physical, practical, cultural and even vocational education to a certain extent, separate schools or colleges are not absolutely necessary. A supplementary education provided for either boys or girls by leisure-hour training of the Y. M. C. A. type on our own cultural lines as well as by some kind of home-training through hostels can go a long way towards correcting the evils of the present system.

##### TYPE NO. 1 LEISURE HOUR TRAINING

The feature of the first of these types is that it requires an irreducible minimum of men and money, yet it may contribute a good deal towards making

up for the deficiencies of the present system. Boys and youths residing in their own homes and getting academic education from local schools and colleges may resort during leisure-hours and holidays to a neighbouring place, preferably an *ashrama*, where adequate arrangements are made for physical and cultural training. Such an *ashrama* needs set up a gymnasium, organize from time to time sports and athletic feat competitions, and make provisions for regular drill for the development of physical efficiency of the pupil-members. It should also have a library and arrange regular discourses and do all that is possible for the training of the will and emotions as mentioned in a previous chapter. Similar facilities may be thrown open to the girls of the neighbourhood through a *mahilâ ashrama*, particularly to those above ten years of age.

Such an institution may also utilize the advantages of the Boy-Scout or Girl-Guide movement, as the case may be, by getting up an affiliated corps with its young members. Children and adolescents have a gang-spirit and this spirit may be utilized fully by directing it into useful channels through the Scout system for the development of their physical efficiency as well as for character-building. This system will surely prove a splendid agency for making the members strong, energetic, resourceful,

enterprising, willing, efficient and thoroughly disciplined servants of society. Several attractive devices in the shape of uniforms, badges, signs, whistles, signals, games and excursions make the training immensely interesting. The whole thing has been converted into a highly amusing sport and thus the training based on the principle of self-activity is bound to be effective to a degree. Introduction of national games, discourses on Indian culture, facilities for training in social service, as well as association with their noble guides at the *ashrama* will more than compensate any denationalizing influence that is ascribed by some to Scout-training. Of course, an all-India organization on national lines like the 'Sevâdal' or the 'Bratachâri' may prove to be a better substitute.

This kind of educational work may be undertaken by all national organizations, specially in cities, towns and big villages with High schools, wherever, of course, men and money required for the purpose may be spared. This will cost much less than a school and will certainly prove more useful than an ordinary school.

In this connection it may be noted that according to the capacity of each institution the programme for leisure-hour training may be limited to one or two items. One providing simply a gym-

nasium and encouraging physical culture will be doing no mean service to the local people. Another concentrating solely on providing facilities for the study of Scriptures, or for practical training in handicrafts during leisure-hours, will certainly give a cultural or economic lift to the members and thus have an educational value of a high order. Each of these institutions should, of course, strive to provide more and more items for an all-round supplementary leisure-hour training.

Where it is not possible to make any permanent arrangement for even one item of the leisure-hour training programme, an organization may do some appreciable work on the line simply if it encourages physical, cultural and even economic training of the neighbouring children and youths by organizing competitions and awarding prizes.

The less is the cost of maintaining an institution, the greater is its chance for spreading over the country under the patronage of different social service organizations and the more therefore is its possibility of increasing the magnitude of healthy educational influence over the present system. Judged from this point of view this simple type of leisure-hour institutions has a considerable utility and it should be given as much attention as is possible for us.

## TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

### TYPE NO. 2A

#### HOSTELS FOR YOUTHS

The next type, namely, hostel for college students, run separately for young men and women, costs a little more of energy and money than the previous one, but it can provide for a more improved quality of supplementary training. Run on the lines of a *brahmacharya ashrama* under the care and guidance, preferably, of monks, or nuns as the case may be, it should have a congenial environment, which is undoubtedly the first thing necessary for a healthy growth of the pupils. Here provision should be made to make up for all the glaring omissions of the present system by a systematic home-training, leaving academic education to the care of existing colleges.

This type, if properly worked, is cheap and yet highly effective, so far as rounding off the defective education received from schools and colleges and turning out a considerably healthier stuff from our student population is concerned. For youths going up for higher education, this type of institutions can be expected to do all that is necessary for their physical improvement, moral and cultural development and even for economic efficiency to a certain extent by providing training in farming and home-

industries, banking and commerce, and such other things.

We should observe that the Y. M. C. A. and other Christian Missionary organizations have considered it an effective device for spreading their culture among the youths of this country. Undoubtedly during their college life the youths receive the greatest amount of thought-influence that goes to mould their future career. Their education, as we have observed, does not help them to develop their physique, expand their heart, train their will and equip themselves properly for the hard struggles of life as well as for the improvement of their surroundings. Moreover, it is precisely during this period that the environment of colleges and hostels and the exigencies of city or town life subject them most to the pernicious influence of the modern materialistic civilization emphasizing selfishness and sense-enjoyment. If in the course of the four or six years they spend for college education they can come in touch with 'life-giving and character-building' influence and adjust their lives accordingly, the problem of regeneration of this country will surely become easy for solution. Surely, it is on the youths that the whole future of the country depends and so the greatest service to the country at the present moment is to equip them properly for

discharging their duties to the motherland. For this, they have to be tended very carefully, the cultural poison they have to swallow during this period through the negative education they receive has to be counteracted by a decidedly healthy environmental influence and a well-balanced supplementary training. For serving this purpose the Students' Home type of institutions is an excellent device.

## TYPE NO. 2B

HOSTEL FOR COLLEGE YOUTHS  
WITH LEISURE HOUR TRAINING  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUTSIDERS

The combination of such a Home with arrangements for leisure-hour training (TYPE NO. 1) for outsiders may prove a highly useful educational agency specially in district and sub-divisional towns. A full-fledged institution of this type, costing as it does, much less men, money and worry than a college or even a school has every chance of being copied by many wherever there is a population of college-going youths. Thus this type of institutions has immense possibilities for extending an edifying influence over the present system.

## TYPE NO. 2C

HOSTEL FOR SCHOOL PUPILS

Hostels run on similar lines for school boys or girls will no doubt be more effective than mere

leisure-hour training. But these cannot be expected to have as much educational value as hostels for youths. Adults have a power of resistance, physical as well as mental, more developed than little children. This is why they may be exposed to uncongenial environment of outside colleges and allowed to fight with them ; all that they require are inspiration and proper guidance which may be had from a hostel run on the lines of (TYPE NO. 2A); whereas childhood and even adolescence require much more attention. Like tender plants they have to be hedged in as it were and protected from incompatible surroundings, both physical and mental. Moreover, this is the period when the body grows very rapidly, so they have to be given special facilities in the shape of proper food, air and physical exercise. A congested city like Calcutta, for instance, with its polluted air, adulterated food and little scope for outdoor exercise, is not at all a fit place for accommodating such a vast school-going population. A hostel here for school boys or girls will not obviously help them much, even so far as their physical growth is concerned. Then the heavy syllabus, unnatural method of teaching without any reference to their psychological requirements and the coercive discipline that our children have to encounter in most of the ordinary schools, together

with the contaminating influence of led-astray fellow pupils are surely too much for young minds to be counteracted merely by a supplementary training in hostels. The pressure of the present system of school education tends to stunt their intellectual as well as moral growth, and these little ones have not the strength to withstand it even if they receive inspiration and guidance through the hostel.

Boys or girls during the period of adolescence, however, may be benefited to a certain extent by such hostels, because their resisting power is more developed than that of little children. So we may conduct hostels for school boys or girls above eleven and find them more effective than mere leisure-hour training, but we cannot expect very much from these institutions.

It is to be noted in this connection that the different types of institutions introduced in this chapter have their values only as necessary correctives of the evils of the present system of education. They are meant primarily for serving more or less like mental hospitals where young victims of the modern system of education may get necessary mental treatment and nursing in order to ensure their normal and natural growth on their own national lines. This is the central idea of these institutions and if it be worked out as fully as possible by ade-

quate arrangements, they will continue to have immense utility in connection with man-making and nation-building at least as long as the present educational regime will last.

Under a properly conceived national university, schools and colleges are surely expected to cater for whatever is necessary for the normal and natural growth of manhood, leaving much less to be done through hostels or leisure-hour training. Until such a consummation a good deal of healthy educational work may profitably be carried on through leisure-hour training and suitable hostels run separately for boys and girls.

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS (*continued*)

## SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

For our children till they attain the age of puberty, much more useful service can be rendered through a Day school run on proper lines, than through a hostel.

In this connection we should always remember the fact that our young ones are in a house on fire, as it were, and they demand immediate relief. Unless they are relieved from the deadening pressure of the present unnatural system<sup>s</sup> of school education, most of them will have absolutely no chance for healthy growth. This is why we believe vigorous efforts need be made without any delay for improving school education. So long as it is not done by the authorities concerned, every social service organization will do well to set up a few model Day schools, thoroughly up-to-date in all respects and yet strictly loyal to all that is decidedly good and healthy in our old, indigenous system.

Serious efforts should be made to put into

<sup>s</sup> See *supra* Chap. IV.

## OUR EDUCATION

practice the principles discussed in the chapters on basic things, of course, as far as it is permitted by the circumstances under which such schools will have to be conducted.

### TYPE NO. 3A NURSERY SCHOOL

The psychological approach to the problem of education has made it essential that children of different age-groups should receive absolutely different treatment. Children between three and six years of age have found a distinct place in the educational programme of the modern West. During this period they attend what is known as Nursery schools more for social experience than for formal instruction. Through all sorts of attractive devices, games and entertainments they are made to learn at this stage to develop the powers of observation, train their attention, and overcoming their natural shyness and propensities for mischievous pranks they learn to live honourably and usefully in the company of their fellow pupils,—of course, as far as the capacity of their young minds may permit.

In our country the first five years of one's life have all along been allowed to lie fallow so far as school education is concerned. We may very well take a leaf out of the book of the Western experience of the moment and try to find out by experiment

what kind of Nursery schools may suit the requirements of Indian infants.

A Nursery school with mixed pupils of both sexes has to be manned entirely by competent women teachers. Infants, particularly, have to grow in an atmosphere of motherly affection and care. Their tender minds must on no account be coerced to do anything. They have to be attracted and induced to do the right thing by way of a delightful pastime. Self-activity gently guided by able hands is all that they require for their natural growth.

The women teachers in such schools must be trained beforehand in the essentials of Nursery school teaching. Moreover, those in charge of such schools should have the vision and initiative for investigating how the Western Nursery schools have to be modified to ensure the normal growth of Indian infants. They have to approach the problem in a spirit of research, for then alone it may very well be expected that they will be able to contribute something substantial to the cause of infant education in this country.

#### TYPE NO. 3B

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL

A Primary school solely for mixed children of both sexes between the ages of six and eleven requires, as a matter of absolute necessity, plenty

of equipments and a good deal of expert knowledge. These are as much indispensable even for a modern Primary school as the school premises or the school teacher. Every social service organization will render valuable service to the country if it can build up a few such model Primary schools and find out by patient and systematic experiment how it may, with the strictest possible economy of men and money, adapt the perfectly rational and universal principles of pedagogic science to Indian conditions and requirements. Let each concentrate on rearing up at least one such school and try seriously to contribute, as a result of its experience, something substantial to the important subject of child education in India.

One need hardly repeat that 'learning through activity' should be a feature of these Primary schools. It may be spinning or any other handicraft or a number of such things suited to the taste and capacity of the young ones with which their lessons on various subjects should be co-ordinated as far as possible. And as the Wardha Scheme points out, "Stress should be laid on the principles of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning." During this period their vernacular is to be the only language they need learn, and that also gradually,

through a psychological method. They should be trained to be clean, tidy, orderly and self-reliant in their habits, bold, honest and active in their temperament as far as it is possible for them. In short, *the glaring omissions* of the present system, particularly related to the training of physical and practical aptitude, should be made up as far as practicable by a conscious and deliberate effort of the teachers concerned. Such schools should preferably be under women teachers.

We do not think that it is meet for any of the social service organizations to rush merely for setting up Primary schools of the stereotyped nature as a necessary appendage of rural reconstruction and console itself with the thought that it will thereby be serving the country substantially. If we cannot afford to improve the barbarous method in vogue, we should at least have the decency of having nothing to do with it.

#### TYPE NO. 3C

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL

For bigger children we shall do well to set up model Day schools separately for boys and girls. We should always remember that just as psychological requirements distinguish boys from girls so they do distinguish little children of either sex from the bigger ones. When adolescence sets in, say

at about the age of twelve, a great change comes over the mental make-up of both boys and girls, and this requires a new adjustment in the method of teaching as well as in the subjects of their study. This is why absolutely separate arrangements are to be made for either boys or girls roughly between the ages of twelve and fourteen in what may be conveniently called Middle schools.

Such a school corresponds to the M. E. school under the present system minus the Primary and pre-Primary classes. Our model Middle schools should better have nothing to do with any foreign language and should have provisions for vocational training as a prominent feature to which lessons on all other subjects should be integrally related. As in the Primary schools, education in the Middle schools also has to centre round one or more basic crafts. Hence these schools will differ materially from the present M. E. ones. Such institutions may more aptly be called National Middle schools or Senior Basic schools. These will no doubt be in continuation of the Primary or Junior Basic schools, though they are to be run in separate establishments with distinct routines, syllabus, methods of teaching and discipline, and nature of games and recreations.

It is to be seen that a pupil at the end of the

Middle school course may have a somewhat comprehensive education having a lasting effect on its future life as a healthy and useful member of the society. 'Learning through activity' should continue to be the feature of these schools and it is to be seen that at the end of the course each pupil may come out with a practical knowledge of at least one basic craft. In the rural areas we shall do well to arrange for agricultural training in the Middle schools for boys in addition to an optional course of at least one among many basic crafts suited particularly to the local conditions. In the Middle schools for girls the craft selected should have a particular bearing on the peculiar taste, aptitude, and temperament of girls in general and of the locality in particular.

TYPE NO. 3D  
HIGH SCHOOL

While Middle schools are meant mainly for the rural areas and considered sufficient for doling out the right kind of education among the vast majority of boys and girls, urban and suburban areas as well as prosperous and advanced villages may have what may be called High schools. The distribution of the H. E. schools under the present system appears to be somewhat on this basis.

Even under the present system, the lower forms corresponding to the Primary and pre-Primary

course may be detached from the H. E. schools leaving the latter to deal with pupils roughly between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Boys and girls of this age-group must have separate schools. The medium of instruction should, as a rule, be the pupils' vernacular. We shall do well to introduce some sort of extra-curricular vocational training by way of supplementing the merely academic education imparted through the present H. E. schools. Games, excursions, Boy-Scout or Girl-Guide activities with special emphasis on social service should also come in, as far as permitted by circumstances, to enhance the educational value of these schools.

It goes without saying that the earliest opportunity should be seized to do away with the necessity of teaching any foreign language through these schools. Moreover, special attention should in every case be paid, as far as possible, to the school-environment, the character and bearing of teachers as well as to improved methods of teaching and discipline, in fact to all that may make the pupils sound in body and mind.

We should note that Middle schools as well as High schools also will require experts and equipments no less than the Primary ones. Each organization should, therefore, do well to estimate its strength before starting a Day school of any variety.

## TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

It should not, on any account, be under the illusion that it may serve the cause of education by simply establishing any number of stereotyped institutions in the country.

### TYPE NO. 3E

#### MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL WITH HOSTEL

Particularly in rural areas, Middle or High schools may require, for economic or other considerations, the establishment of hostels. Such hostels will be on the line of what has been described as TYPE NO. 2c. The hostel must not only serve as a residence of the pupils but also as a place where they may receive a well-devised home-training conducive to a harmonious growth of their heads, hands and hearts.

### TYPE NO. 4

#### RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

A complete Residential school after the ancient *gurukula* system will undoubtedly have the greatest educational value. Boys below twelve should better live with parents, because at this tender age they positively require much more loving care and attention than what they may possibly get from male teachers. In our ancient system the age of admission was at or about nine when the *upanayana* ceremony was usually performed. But then, they

would be admitted into the *guru's* household where they would get motherly care.

However, by Residential school we mean a school run on the lines of a *brahmacharya ashrama*, where boys or girls from the age of twelve right up to the end of school education will reside and get their academic education together with all that is necessary for a healthy and all-round growth of their body and mind.

A Residential school, therefore, should be located in a healthy place and it must have environmental conditions conducive to physical and mental growth, and this is the first requisite of such an institution.

The second thing necessary is adoption of improved methods. We have already observed that so far as our school children are concerned, no amount of arrangements for supplementary training for developing physique, efficiency and character will be of any avail unless they are saved from the evils of the unscientific and unnatural method of teaching, which is commonly practised in our ordinary schools. This is the reason why in a residential school adoption of improved methods is a matter of absolute necessity.

Then, of course, all that are needed for physical development and efficiency as well as character-

building have certainly to be provided for. The requirements for these have been already noted in some previous chapters. Arrangements for vocational training on some suitable lines should also be made by way of supplementing the merely academic education under the existing system.

The very object of a Residential school is to afford all possible facilities to each individual pupil so that it may have a healthy growth of body and mind, and this makes the task of conducting a Residential school extremely difficult and complicated, requiring a good deal of expert attention and plenty of necessary equipments. While building up a Residential school, we should remember that our immediate aim is to furnish the country with a model of a full-fledged institution for our boys or girls, and this is precisely the reason why we should be particularly conscious of our responsibilities involved in the task and take special care always to measure our strength and proceed very cautiously.

Considering the complicated and difficult nature of this task, it appears to be far more advisable to leave academic education to the care of outside schools and concentrate on running hostels on the lines of *brahmacharya ashramas* with adequate provisions for necessary supplementary training. As long as our boys will have to be educated under the

present system, such hostels, requiring much less men and resources than Residential schools, will prove to be of immense value by contributing all that is essential towards "man-making and character-building assimilation of ideas". In any case, till an organization is not sure of having at its command a large number of qualified teachers, supervisors and other functionaries with sterling character, it should not venture to go in for establishing a Residential school. It should always remember that the very object of starting such a school will be defeated if this essential requisite is not fulfilled. With a few well-chosen men of character, on the other hand, a hostel on the lines of TYPE NO. 20 may be run for, say, two hundred boys receiving their academic education from a local school.

All that has been said in connection with this topic applies equally to separate Residential schools for girls under the exclusive management of women teachers and supervisors.

#### TYPE NO. 5 COLLEGE

Considering the limited resources of the social service organizations of our country, it may be said that they should do well to economize their strength by running separate hostels as envisaged in TYPE

NO. 2A for our young men and women and leave their academic education to the care of outside colleges. Unnecessary multiplication of arrangements for imparting college education under the existing system involves merely a waste of energy and resources of which the strictest possible economy should be made by every organization. Colleges may, however, be worth the trouble only if they are meant to be independent centres of education on national lines and not tagged to any of the universities under the existing system. It goes without saying that an organization having the resources for starting an independent national university like the Benares Hindu University can surely go in for establishing colleges. In these cases palpably there is justification for making provisions for the academic part of education as well.

TYPE NO. 6  
SPECIAL COLLEGE  
AND SCHOOL

Although we have suggested incorporation of agricultural and industrial courses by way of supplementary training in our schools and hostels, we cannot expect that any one of them will be able to provide for a comprehensive education in agriculture or for a systematic training in a large number of profitable industries and handicrafts or in technology or commerce.

In view of the grave unemployment problem in the country and the dearth of adequate facilities for technological, commercial, industrial and agricultural training, social service organizations will serve the cause of education better if they try to establish schools and colleges on these lines. Of course, each of these will require enormous funds. Yet since, under present conditions, the utility of such an institution is beyond question, the earliest opportunity should be seized by every organization to establish such schools or colleges.

The Bengal College of Engineering and Technology established and conducted by the National Council of Education at Jadavpur (Calcutta) and the Agricultural Institute at Naini (Allahabad) run by American Missionaries are commendable instances of such educational work. Colleges for music as well as for arts and artistic crafts as conducted in Lucknow have also immense educational value and are worthy of emulation.

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS (*continued*)  
FOR THE POOR MIDDLE CLASS AND MASSES

TYPE NO. 7  
INSTITUTION FOR POOR  
MIDDLE CLASS BOYS

On principle, boys from poor middle class families should be equipped primarily for improving the economic condition of their families and that with the minimum expenditure of time and energy on their part after education. So in any institution meant solely for them, such as an orphanage, vocational training should be more prominent than academic education. Exceptions, of course, should be made for the specially brilliant ones. An elementary training of the senses and reason, an elementary knowledge of the three R's, a general enlightenment through conversations and discourses together with a sound practical knowledge regarding one or two crafts should be sufficient for the education of most of the mediocre boys of this group.

All the boys, therefore, in an orphanage irrespective of their parts should not be allowed to go in for a High school course, for the simple reason that this will mean indiscreet waste of time, energy and

public money. A basic education course of eight years, covering all that have been said to be just sufficient for most of them has to be evolved by experiment through institutions run by different national organizations for the education of poor boys.

Then, regarding the vocational training which is to be the principal factor of their education we should make it a point to notice that our middle class boys are not usually strong and hardy enough to ply the trade of a carpenter or blacksmith or even that of a weaver. So carpentry, weaving and smithy may be arranged for only those who are physically fit for such occupation. Provision for vocations requiring much less muscular exertion is what is more urgent for the occupational training of the average middle class boys. The trade of a dentist or of an engraver may, for instance, suit many; specialization in repair works of various kinds may afford a number of suitable vocations.

As it may be inconvenient for such institutions to make necessary arrangements for teaching a large number of crafts, they may do well at present to place some of their pupils under experts in their respective workshops, laboratories or places of trade, and send some others to existing occupational schools of different kinds.

Then, in these institutions there should be nothing that may possibly depress the poor boys. Orphanage and such other names should better not be used. Such treatment should be accorded to them as may not give them any occasion to feel that they are charity boys. Such boys should not on principle be made to collect alms,—this should be as a rule the function of the workers or volunteers from the public. Moreover, as segregation itself of poor boys in a charitable institution has a depressing effect, the educational value of these institutions may be considerably enhanced by admitting a moderate proportion of paying students, if that is possible.

#### AGENCIES FOR MASS EDUCATION

Besides doing what is necessary for middle class children and youths, through the different types of institutions mentioned above, so that they may feel and work for the uplift of the masses according to their capacity and convenience, every national organization should make some direct efforts for mass education, preferably through village centres meant particularly for the rehabilitation of rural areas. Such village centres should, as a rule, dole out some sort of general education among the masses of the neighbourhood along with food and medicine according to

## OUR EDUCATION

need. Each of these centres may take, directly or through interested local people, suitable measures for utilizing as many as possible of the following agencies for the spread of mass education.

### TYPE NO. 8A

#### FREE BASIC SCHOOL

It should be essentially an elementary school of agriculture and other crafts with which provision for a general cultural training should be co-ordinated. To leave a lasting impression on the pupils it should have an eight years' course or at least a seven years' one as recommended by the Wardha Scheme, and should be split up into two stages, Junior Basic and Senior Basic, with distinct routines, syllabus, etc. as discussed in connection with TYPE NOS. 8B and 8C.

It should be noted in this connection that in these schools special arrangements should be made for teaching the pupils the elements of their classical language. This will prove highly useful in giving them a cultural lift. The culture of the Hindus may be said to be embedded in Sanskrit, hence an elementary knowledge of this language is essential for their cultural advancement. So also is the knowledge of Arabic an essential cultural equipment of the Muslim masses. The religious texts of both the communities written in their respective classical

language remain sealed to the masses and very often leave them to be fooled and exploited by wily priests, whose air of superiority is derived in most cases from a smattering of this language. Even with an elementary knowledge of their own classical language, they may rise above this miserable state and come to their own so far as social esteem and privileges are concerned. To the Hindus of low castes Swami Vivekananda pointed out, "The only safety, I tell you men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit."

TYPE NO. 8B  
NIGHT SCHOOL

It is meant for bare literacy as well as general enlightenment through pictures, charts, discourses and conversations, and is intended mainly for adults who have to work during the day. The recent literacy campaigns carried on by university students during holidays under the auspices of the Indian National Congress and other organizations are worth emulating. The activities of the *Loka-sikshā Parishad* of Santiniketan on this line deserve particular mention in this connection.

TYPE NO. 8C  
LANTERN, LECTURE

A good deal of effective work may be done by

## OUR EDUCATION

lantern lectures. Moreover, the cinema with education films and the radio with suitable programmes may be profitably utilized in the cause of adult education. A new kind of *kathâ* (Paurânic recital) on educational topics illustrated by lantern slides or cinema films and accompanied by songs and recitals as usual may prove an excellent device for the general enlightenment of the masses. Through these measures particularly the adults should be acquainted with the fundamentals of history, geography and science,—the three constituents of modern knowledge related respectively to time, space and causation. Along with these they should also be enlightened on the basic ideas and ideals of their distinctive culture based on their religion.

### TYPE NO. 8D EXHIBITION

These may be organized during festivals or in fairs (*melâs*) in the neighbourhood for giving an impetus to the improvement of agriculture and home-industries by awarding prizes. Lantern lectures, educational films and suitable radio programmes on such occasions may prove highly useful.

### TYPE NO. 8E FREE LIBRARY

Such village libraries meant for the poor people should be stocked with informative and inspiring

## TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

books, periodicals and newspapers, and not merely with cheap and worthless novels and story-books.

### TYPE NO. 8F

#### SMALL MUSEUM

A village museum exhibiting agricultural, industrial and commercial goods, machines and implements, pictorial charts, etc. has immense educational possibilities.

### TYPE NO. 8G

#### DEMONSTRATION FARM

Every important village should have a farm for demonstrating and explaining improved methods of agriculture and allied industries.

All the above-mentioned agencies are exceedingly useful in spreading the right type of education among the masses, and every social service organization within this land should do its best to put in as much work as possible through all these varied agencies. The task of mass education is immense, no doubt. But it is a sacred and very urgent one. Let us go forward with indomitable zeal. May our efforts prove equal to the task.

*By the same author*

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